

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

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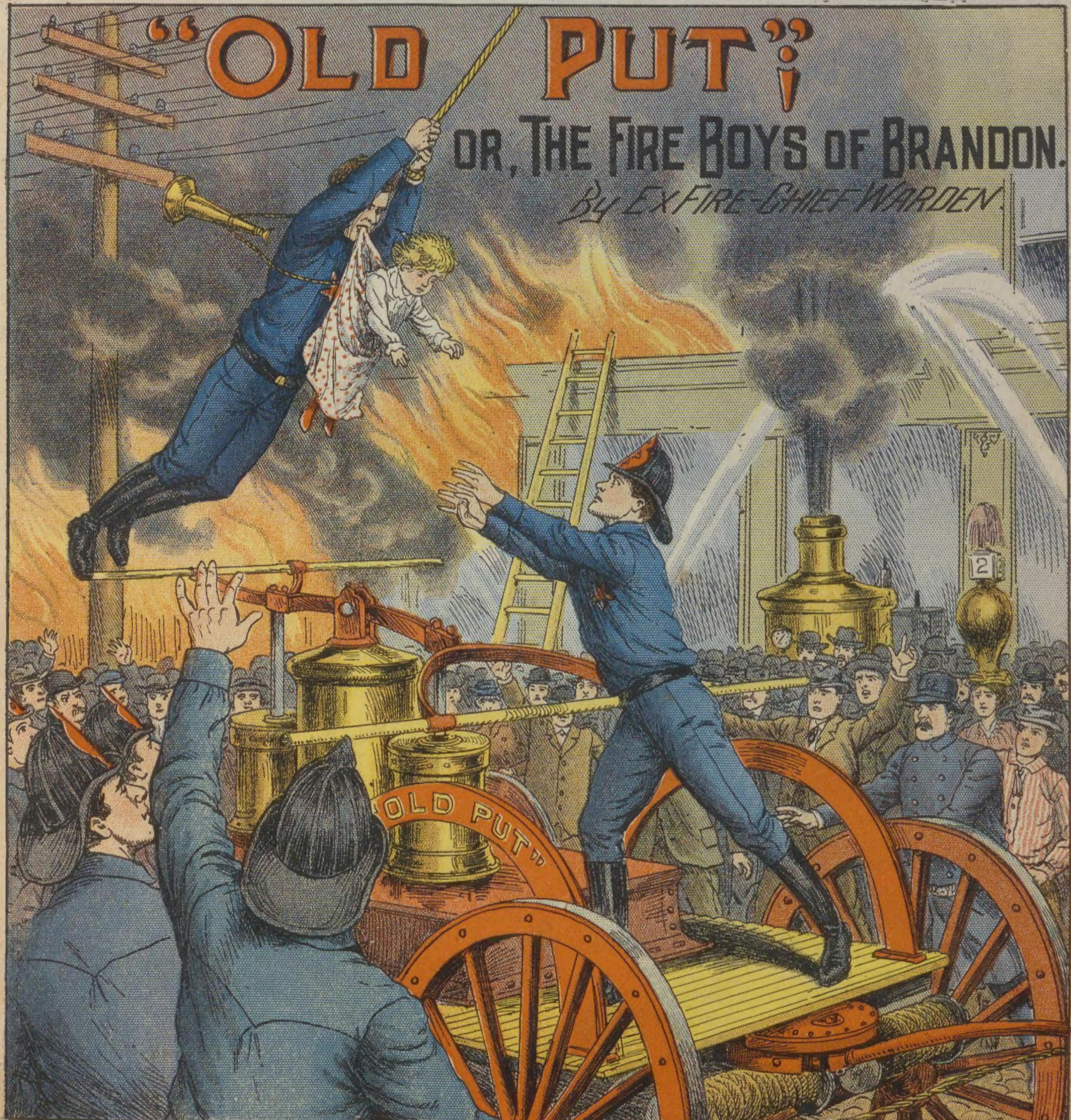
NEW YORK, APRIL 18, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

"OLD PUT?"

OR, THE FIRE BOYS OF BRANDON.

By Ex-FIRE-CHIEF WARDEN.



He swung back toward the roaring, crackling flames, then back again over the street, the babe firmly held by his teeth. The boys pushed "Old Put" forward, and Sam Collins stood up, and caught him as he swung back.

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BY EX-FIRE CHIEF WARDEN

CHAPTER I.

“OLD PUT.”

“Say, boys, have you heard the news?”

“What news?”

“Why, about Harry Thorne.”

“No. What is it?”

“Why, he tried to join Brandon No. 2 Fire Company, and they blackballed him.”

“The deuce! What'd they do that for?”

“Well, that's the mystery. Some say it was because of his youth, and others try to make out it's because the company list is full. But some of Harry's friends say it's because he is a mechanic—a greasy machinist. The dudes didn't want him or any other mechanic.”

“What in thunder did he want to join that dude company for, anyhow?”

“Don't know. There's nothing of the dude about Harry. Don't believe he even thought about it at all.”

“What does he say about it?”

“Doesn't say a word.”

“Isn't he going to try the other two companies?”

“No. Says he'll get up a company himself.”

“Eh? What? Well, I'm with him in that!”

“So am I.”

“And I! and I!”

“So say we all of us.”

“Say, Tom, have you talked with Harry about it?”

“Yes. He is fixing up a fire engine for his company.”

“Fixing up an engine! How is that?”

“Why, you recollect the old hand pump engine—the first the town ever had?”

“Yes—the Gen. Putnam.”

“Well, when the new steam engines came the old hand pump was stuck away under a shed down by McCreary's machine shops, like an old worn-out dump cart. When Harry heard he had been blackballed by Brandon No. 2 he went to McCreary, his boss, and asked him who owned the Gen. Putnam. The boss said he had bought it for old iron because it was all out

of order and no good generally. ‘Let me fix it up so it will work, and I'll make it worth something to you,’ said Harry. ‘Go ahead,’ said the boss, and he did. Harry is a genius. He can make a town clock out of an old tea kettle. In a little while, by working at odd hours, he had the old thing in first-class order, had it repainted and polished till it looked like new, and changed the name to Old Put. Lord, but you ought to see it. It's a beauty. He is just seventeen, and says he won't have a boy older than that in the company, and he wants thirty good, strong fellows of that age.”

“That takes me in!”

“And me, too!”

“And me!”

“Well, I am over seventeen, but under eighteen,” said one of the boys. “I'm going to knock off about seven months and get in. Harry and me have always been good friends.”

“But see here, Tom. What's he going to do? Join the fire department?”

“I don't know,” and Tom Wilson shook his head. “Mr. McCreary told him he'd give him the engine if he'd get up a company and make it go.”

“Well, let's see him about it, anyhow.”

“Yes. We'll find him in the machine shop yard any evening after working hours.”

“Then we'll meet there to-morrow evening—eh, boys?”

“Yes, at seven o'clock.”

There were seven boys engaged in the above conversation one beautiful moonlit evening, some years ago, as they reclined on the river bank on the outskirts of Brandon.

Brandon is a typical New England town. For a long time it was a quiet little village nestled unnoticed among the hills where the babbling river sang continuously over its rocky bed. But one day a far-sighted man saw and computed the immense power that daily went to waste in the dancing waters of the river, for where the village stood, and above and below it, the fall invited mill after mill with tempting offers of unlimited horse power. He bought land on both sides of the stream and then began building mills. The sleepy little village woke up into a thriving, bustling city of many thousands of busy people.

With the opening of each new mill people came from other towns to get the work that was waiting for them. Men, women, and children worked. As men grew rich their sons and daughters waxed proud and held up their heads above those who toiled for their daily bread.

But that is the custom in all countries. Money separates the rich from the poor no matter what qualities may adorn personal character.

Among the many who came to Brandon for work was a poor man of the name of Thorne. He had a wife and two children. The son's name was Harry and the daughter Etta. They both attended school for three years, and then had to go into the mills to aid their father in his struggle for a moderate share of life's comforts.

Harry went into McCreary's machine shops, where he soon developed a marvelous genius for inventing improvements in machinery, tools, and methods. The foreman called McCreary's attention to the boy, and the proprietor showed instant appreciation of his skill and spirit.

Etta went into a cotton mill.

The wages were small, but the work was not hard. She was with the girls whom she knew. Young as she was, her budding beauty was remarked by all in the mill, old and young. She was modest, quite unconscious of her beauty, and as quiet as a young matron in her ways.

Both had been two years in the mills at the time our story opens in Brandon. Harry had grown quite manly, was strong and active, and was popular with all who knew him, young or old.

On the evening following the talk among the boys on the river bank Tom Wilson and nearly a dozen companions called at the yard of McCreary's mills, and peered through the bars of the locked gate.

They saw Harry and two friends examining the old engine, which shone bright and new now. Tom whistled a signal, and Harry glanced round toward the gate and saw the boys.

"Hello, Tom!" he called.

"Let us in, Harry!" Tom returned.

Harry went forward and unlocked the gate. The boys came in and quickly surrounded the renovated old fire engine.

"Oh, but she is a beauty!" Tom exclaimed, as he walked around the engine and gazed at it from every point of the compass.

"Yes, indeed," assented every boy present.

"I say, Harry!" called Tom, "we all want to join your company. You know every one of us, and we know you."

"That's all right, Tom. We'll begin right now. Here's enough to begin."

In ten minutes the company was organized with Harry Thorne as foreman, under the name of "Old Put" Fire Company.

Then each boy proposed one or two more who were well known to all present for membership, until about forty names were down on the list.

"Tell 'em all to be here to-morrow evening," said Harry, as they broke up, "and we'll have a few runs round the yard with her. We have two acres here, and the high fence will keep out the crowd."

The boys went away full of enthusiasm. On the following evening they were all on hand eager to take lessons in the duties of a fireman. Old Uncle Bill Daly, the night watchman, who had been a New York fireman for twenty years, was on hand to give them points. Harry had already picked up many points.

"Now, when Uncle Billy taps the bell," he said to the boys, "you are to seize the rope and run round the yard with her. A roadway next the fence has been cleared all the way round. I'll run just ahead and you must follow me. Sam Collins, you

are to sit up there in front and work the brakes so as to keep her from running over us when we want to slow up or stop. Now let us have a call, Uncle Billy."

Old Bill Daly tapped the mill bell and instantly everybody sprang forward to his place. Harry made a dash round the enclosure, and the engine came thundering after him. Round, round they went at a splendid pace, making the circle four times ere they stopped again at the starting point.

"How was that, Uncle Billy?" Harry asked the old fireman when they stopped.

"Never saw a better run in my life," said the old man, his eyes lit up with the light of the old days. "You boys have got the stuff in you, the get-up and go that makes good firemen. Now at the next call dash round the yard three times and fetch up by the mill race, drop the 'sucker' into the sluice and man the pump. Now!"

At the first tap of the bell the boys were off like a pack of young colts, and the engine went thundering on behind them. At the third round they halted at the millrace, connected the hose with the water, and manned the pump.

One, two, three!

Ten muscular youths on each side at work on the horizontal handles of the pump produced an immense pressure. A stream of water, clear as crystal, was thrown nearly one hundred feet in the silvery moonlight, and a wild cheer burst from their lips at the same instant.

CHAPTER II.

HARRY'S BRAVE ACT.

Night after night the members of the Old Put fire company met in the yard of the McCreary mills to practice running with the machine under the guidance of old Uncle Bill Daly. Each had provided himself with a blue shirt with a red star on the left breast, a pair of top boots, and had paid in money for the old ex-fireman to buy helmets in New York. The hats were promptly ordered by the old man from the manufacturers.

The mill operatives had long used asbestos ropes in handling hot iron, as they were lighter than chains, and did not become heated. Fire had no effect on them, as they do not burn in any degree of heat.

By advice of Daly Harry asked the foreman for a few ropes for the boys. He was very promptly refused.

Smarting under the refusal, Harry decided that he would ask no more favors from anyone, and the boys backed him up in it. Some of them made remarks that were not complimentary to the foreman, and some busybody repeated them to him.

He very promptly forbade them meeting in the mill yard, and remained on guard one evening to keep them out, locking the gate and placing the key in his pocket. The boys went away.

The next day Harry went to the proprietor and asked permission to use the yard for fire-engine exercise. It was promptly given—and in writing.

That night Harry showed the night watchman the written permission, and the gate was thrown open to the boys.

The foreman heard of it the next day, and from that day became the enemy of Harry Thorne.

A few days after that incident the foreman moved into a new house which he had bought of a contractor.

At the same time the young firemen's hats came. In front of each crown were the letters "O. P." in silver.

That night at ten o'clock, as they were exercising in the mill yard, the alarm of fire was sounded.

"In the Second District!" cried Harry, as he counted the strokes. "Let's go to it, boys!"

They gave a whoop, the gates were thrown open, and the boys dashed out into the street like so many wild colts. People along the street turned, looked and wondered what had become of the steam fire-engines which the city had bought. Up the street they dashed, the entire company at the ropes with Harry in the lead, trumpet in hand, and old Put thundering along behind them.

After turning two corners they came in sight of the fire—a frame building, three stories. Being much nearer to it than the steam fire companies, "Old Put" was the first on the ground, and when Brandon No. 2 company dashed up the foreman was dumfounded at seeing an old-style hand-pump engine sending a stream of water all over the building.

It was no time to ask questions. The dry timber in the building was being devoured by the red flames at an alarming rate. Harry Thorne had broken up the door with an ax and disappeared inside.

Tom Wilson at the nozzle was guiding the stream of water here, there, and everywhere, like an old veteran. But the boys on the engine! How they worked! How they bore down on the pressure pump! How the water fairly hissed through the nozzle! It fairly wriggled in Tom's hands.

Suddenly Harry Thorne reappeared at a window on the third floor with a young girl in his arms.

"There he is!" cried a score of voices, pointing up to him. "Come down! Come down!"

But the stairs were in one mass of red flame within. He could not go down that way. It was escape through that window or roast.

"Send up a ladder!" he cried.

Old Put had no ladder.

The ladder of Brandon No. 2 was up at the other corner of the house.

"Give me a ladder!" he cried again.

But he called in vain.

Suddenly he turned to the young girl, who seemed to be but twelve or fourteen years old, and spoke to her.

She was seen to get behind him and put her arms round his neck.

Then he was seen to quickly extend the asbestos rope, which he carried at his belt, several times around her body and his own—lashing her to himself.

"Oh, God, he's going to jump!" cried someone in the crowd.

"Don't! Don't jump!" cried half a hundred voices at once.

Harry tore away the window-sash and it fell to the ground with a crash.

Then he stood up in the window with the young girl lashed to his back.

"Don't jump! Don't jump!" cried out hundreds in a mad frenzy. "You will both be killed!" and a rush was made for the ladder at the other corner.

But two members of the other company had gone into the house on that side, and so the firemen would not let the ladder be moved until they had come out.

Suddenly Harry was seen to make a swinging leap toward the corner and a cry of horror went up.

Then people caught their breath.

He had caught hold of the lightning rod on the corner, and was letting himself down hand-under-hand, with the girl hanging to his neck and back.

Men heard their hearts beat even while the flames roared and the streams hissed, so great was the tension, the mental and nervous strain, as they gazed up at the most daring feat they had ever seen, with two lives in the balance.

Down—down he came, slowly, painfully, but surely, and when within six or eight feet of the ground a score of brawny men rushed through the police guard and stood under him, crying out:

"Let go—let go!"

He let go, and both dropped into the arms of men who would have died to aid one in such a brave act.

How they roared!

Men gave way to tears as the intense suspense relaxed.

The girl was released unharmed, save by a few scorches here and there.

But Harry was not.

He was lifted upon the shoulders of hardy mechanics who had witnessed his feat, and borne out into the street.

The air was filled with hats, canes, and uplifted hands, and the cheering that greeted him was heard nearly a mile away.

Still Tom Wilson at the nozzle kept the stream going. The boys at the pump worked as though their lives depended on their continued exertions.

The other company kept up a stream, too, and in a little while the flames were under control. The house was ruined, though, and the benefit of the firemen's exertions, aside from the life that had been saved, was reaped by the owners of the adjoining property.

The flames suppressed, the firemen turned to the old Putnam, and examined her from every side.

"I wouldn't have known her," said the foreman, to one of his men.

"No, she has been fixed up by one who knows his business. Why, she can throw a stream almost equal to Brandon No. 2."

"Yes—those boys have bone, muscle, and enthusiasm. But that fellow Thorne has made a hit. They have beaten us."

"But they didn't have half as far to come as we did."

"No, but they came like a whirlwind. They have go in them."

"Just listen how they cheer him! The crowd has gone wild over him."

"Yes, it was a wonderful feat—a narrow—very narrow escape. Why, that girl will weigh ninety or one hundred pounds. Just think of that leap for that lightning rod, and the grip he must have to hold on to it!"

Brandon No. 2 was left entirely alone by the crowd. Harry Thorne was the hero of the hour, and Old Put the pet. The steam firemen limbered up and returned to their quarters without even a cheer for what they had done.

When the fire boys of Old Put returned to the mill yard, fully two hundred people escorted them, late as the hour was.

The old watchman had all he could do to keep out the crowd. The old man's eyes lit up as he heard the story of Old Put's success. It reminded him so much of the old times "forty years ago."

CHAPTER III.

A COWARDLY ATTACK.

When Harry Thorne awoke the next morning, bruised and sore, he found himself famous. All Brandon was ringing with his praises. His father, an early riser at all times, went out and bought a paper. He sat down and read it while his wife was preparing breakfast for the family.

"Why, mother! God bless me!" he exclaimed, wiping the moisture from his eyes. "Our Harry has taken the town by storm! Just listen to this! God bless the boy!" and he tried to read it to her.

But it was long, exciting, thrilling, and many things were told that even the firemen did not dream of.

The family in the doomed building had gone out for the evening, leaving the house in charge of a servant and a young daughter who did not feel well enough to go out. The daughter laid down on a lounge and fell asleep. The servant seized the chance to run out and down the street to chat with a friend a little while. In her absence the fire broke out, but the origin of it was a mystery. Harry Thorne had found the young girl wandering about in the smoke bewildered and screaming. His timely arrival had saved her life. The family was named Carroll, and they were quite wealthy.

Just as the old man had finished telling the story to his wife Harry came out of his bedroom ready for breakfast. His father grasped his hand and said, as he wrung it:

"Harry, my boy, I am proud of you! I am glad you didn't join that other company."

"Yes, I am, too, father," he replied, "for we beat them last night at the fire. Whose house was it?" and he looked at the paper in his father's hand.

"Mr. Carroll—Hardy Carroll," replied the old man.

Of course, the mother and sister were proud of the son and brother when they heard the story of his exploit. Etta was now fifteen and very beautiful. She loved her brother with an almost idolatrous love, which he returned in kind.

When Mr. McCreary entered the office of the mill the morning of the fire, he sent for Harry to report to him at the office. Harry did so at once, and the rich manufacturer extended his hand toward him, saying:

"I want to congratulate you, Harry. You made a good showing with the old engine last night."

"Thank you, sir," Harry replied. "I knew there was lots of good in her yet, and just wanted a chance to bring it out. If we only had a home for her now."

"Well, you shall have one. I am going to have one built on that side of the yard out there on Mill street, and make your boys a present of Old Put. You may tell them so, and that work shall begin on the building at once."

"Good gracious, Mr. McCreary!" gasped Harry, "you never do anything by halves. I don't know how to thank you enough."

"That's all right, Harry," said the rich mill owner. "I want to show you boys that I appreciate work and pluck."

Harry went back to his work feeling very happy over the interview with his employer. Every workman he passed in the shops had a kind word for him. He was surprised at the good feeling toward him, and said to himself when he reached his bench:

"I didn't dream that people would think so much of it. I had to make the leap or roast, and I didn't care to roast."

In the evening when he returned home his mother said to him:

"Harry, Mr. and Mrs. Carroll have been here to see me. They are such nice people and so grateful. Mr. Carroll left this for you as a present, and says if you ever need a friend you'll find one in him."

She laid a small morocco case in his hand as she finished speaking.

Harry opened it, and found therein a fine gold watch and chain. His initials were engraved on the watch case, and on the inside were the words:

"From grateful hearts to a brave one."

"Oh, isn't it beautiful!" exclaimed Etta, as she gazed at the valuable present.

"It didn't cost less than \$300!" remarked Harry's father.

"It's a fine watch," said Harry. "I don't like to accept it, but it might offend if I did not."

"And it would be very foolish, too," remarked his mother.

Harry ate his supper and hurried back to the mill yard to meet the boys who would be on hand that evening. He wanted to tell them of the new quarters McCreary had promised to build for them.

When he got there the boys were telling old Bill Daly about Harry's exploit the night before. The old man grasped his hand and said:

"Harry, you're got it right, my boy! But you want a new ladder made at once. Some painters took the old one away over a year ago."

"Yes, we must have ladders," Harry replied. "But for that lightning rod I'd have been dead now."

"Yes. Brandon No. 2 boys are very angry because one of the papers said they wouldn't let you have theirs," put in Tom Wilson.

"Well, I don't blame 'em," Harry replied. "They had two men in the house and to move the ladder might have caused death to them."

He then told them what Mr. McCreary had said to him that morning, and the boys cheered themselves hoarse in their joy over the good news. They passed resolutions thanking the mill owner, and told Harry to tell him about it in the morning.

It was about nine o'clock when Harry and Tom Wilson started for their homes.

They had gone but two blocks when they met three members of Brandon No. 2 Fire Company.

"Ah, there he is!" one of the three was heard to say.

"Here, Thorne, I want to see you," said one of the party, taking Harry by the arm and stopping him. Harry was about to speak when the man said:

"I see in the papers that you said the Brandon No. 2 firemen were jealous and would have let you and that young girl perish before we would have placed a ladder for you. Did you say that?"

"No, I did not," was the quick reply.

"Sure, you didn't?"

"Yes."

"Why did the reporter say you did?"

"Why not ask him about that?"

"Don't get saucy. It might not be healthy for you."

"Take your hand off my arm, sir," said Harry. "If you mean to insult me, you——"

"Ah, shut up on that, or I'll give you a thrashing!" the fellow interrupted.

Then Harry saw they had all been drinking, and had sought him for the purpose of making trouble. He gave him a blow squarely in the face that laid him out on his back, his head striking the pavement with such force as to render him insensible.

Quick as a flash the other two sprang at him. Tom Wilson as quickly met one, and downed him by a blow between the eyes. Tom was brawny, brave, and hard fisted, and so was Harry.

But the third man was a big, burly fellow whom Harry could not manage. Tom sprang to his assistance, and in ten seconds the two put him to flight.

Tom's man rose to his feet and drew a knife. Harry picked up a stone and hurled it at him. It struck him in the breast and he went down with a groan.

"Come away, Tom," Harry said. "We may get into trouble," and they hurried away to their homes.

"They meant to beat us, Harry," said Tom, "but made a dead failure of it," and he chuckled as he hurried along with Harry.

"Yes, a bad failure. It shows how they feel toward Old Put fire boys."

The next day they heard that a member of Brandon No. 2

was in the hospital, having been hit in the breast with a stone and badly hurt.

"Ah! They won't tell who threw that stone," said Harry to Tom. "Well, we won't, either, so don't say a word, Tom."

"No, not a word."

About a week later, while Old Put's fire boys were going through the drill in the mill yard the great fire bell gave the alarm of fire in the fifth district.

"Come on, boys!" cried Harry, snatching up his trumpet.

The gate flew open and the boys passed out with a rush and a roar.

Harry led the way, and the boys followed, drawing the engine after them with a speed that was marvelous.

"Clear the way!" yelled Harry, as he saw people crossing the street at several places.

On they rushed.

The fire was down near the river, in some big tenement, where lived all sorts and conditions of people. One other fire company was there ahead of them, and were just starting a stream when Old Put reached the ground. Just a second later Old Put boys had a stream going.

Harry rushed into the burning building just as one of Columbia's men came out.

"They're all out!" cried the Columbia fireman, as Harry rushed by him.

If Harry heard him he paid no heed, for he rushed up two flights of stairs, and went through a dozen rooms. He finally found a door locked.

"This is strange!" he said, and the next moment he hurled himself against the door and broke the lock. He fell in a heap on the floor.

Springing to his feet he gazed about him. There was a dense smoke in the room, yet he was able to see a woman lying on a lounge bound and gagged. She was struggling to free herself.

He darted to her side, seized and threw her over his shoulder and ran out of the room into the corridor with her. Fortunately he struck the top of the flight of stairs. To run down to the bottom was the work of but a few seconds. He struck the second one, which led down to the street door. But the red flames were there hissing and darting fiery tongues toward him.

He plunged down the stairs and the next moment the firemen were horrified at seeing him roll out on the pavement unconscious, but with the bound and gagged woman in his arms.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE BOUND AND GAGGED WOMAN.

All eyes were turned up at the windows, and hearts beat quickly as the minutes passed and Harry was not seen to emerge from the burning building. No wonder then they were surprised when he rolled out the front door through a mass of flame. A dozen of Old Put's boys sprang forward to draw him away.

Sam Collins and Andy Haygood seized the woman and bore her away while others seized Harry.

Both were unconscious.

"Why, this woman is tied!" exclaimed Collins, as they laid her down on the pavement.

"And gagged!" exclaimed another, who had gone to their assistance.

"What does it mean?" one asked.

"Maybe he had to tie her to bring her out," suggested someone.

"Never," said Collins. "Why should he gag her? There's something wrong here!"

Just then an officer elbowed his way through the crowd to where the woman lay. The other boys reached there with Harry, too, and laid him by her.

"You want a doctor at once," said a citizen.

"Take 'em to the hospital," said the officer.

"I'm a physician—make way here!" cried a burly man, rushing through the crowd to the side of the two bodies.

The firemen had to battle with the flames to prevent them from spreading to the other buildings. The entire block was of frame, old and dry. It required tremendous labor on the part of the firemen to keep it confined to the house in which the fire started.

In the meantime Harry came to, but was half strangled by the smoke he had inhaled. He was scorched and bruised in a dozen places.

"The woman—where is she?" he asked, as soon as he could pull himself together.

"There she is," said the officer, pointing to the woman lying on the ground but a few feet from him. "Did you tie her up?"

"No; I found her bound and gagged," he replied. "Is she dead?"

"No; she has fainted, I guess."

A man appeared and said he was her husband, adding:

"Let me have her. I'll take her to the house of a friend."

"You can't have her till she is out of the hands of the doctor," said an officer.

"I don't want any doctor. She is my wife, and I am going to have her," and he made a rush to take up the still unconscious woman.

The officer grabbed him by the collar, saying:

"Here, you are my prisoner! Come along, sir!"

"What are you arresting me for?" the man demanded.

"That you will find out in time. Come along with me," and he led the way through the crowd with him.

Suddenly the man tripped the officer, who fell heavily to the ground.

In the excitement of the struggle a dense crowd enabled the prisoner to get away. He was nowhere to be seen when the officer rose to his feet.

"Which way did he go?" the officer inquired.

But nobody could tell him.

There were too many in the crowd for anyone to be noticed.

"I guess I was right in my suspicion," muttered the policeman. "I am going to keep my eye on that woman. There's something crooked in this thing," and he made his way back to where the woman lay.

An ambulance had just come from the hospital, and a young doctor was examining her to see whether or not she was still alive.

"She is alive," he said to his attendants. "Put her in."

When she was placed in the ambulance the officer said to the young surgeon:

"Keep her till an officer can be sent up to see her."

"Very well," he replied, and the ambulance drove off.

When it became known to the crowd that the woman was found bound and gagged in her room they scented a mystery. A thousand questions were asked, but no one could give any information on the subject.

The officer who had arrested the man who claimed to be the woman's husband reported the matter to the chief of police. That official immediately sent a man to see that the woman not only did not escape, but to see who had any communication with her.

In a couple of hours after her arrival at the hospital the doctors succeeded in bringing her to.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed, as soon as she could speak.

"In the hospital, and in the hands of friends," replied the doctor who was with her at the time.

"And he—where is he?"

"To whom do you allude?"

"My husband!" and there was a look of terror in her eyes as she spoke.

"Do you wish to see him?"

"No, no, no! Oh, don't let him see me!"

"Well, you are safe, madam. He can't get to you here."

She drew a long breath as if relieved of a horrible fear, and closed her eyes with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Madam," said the detective, as he sat by her bedside, "you were found in a burning building bound and gagged. Who did that?"

She opened her eyes and gave him a quick glance of apprehension.

"Can he get to me again?" she asked.

"No, you are safe."

"It was my husband who bound and gagged me, and left me in that room with the door locked."

"Why did he do it?"

"Oh, he was so cruel to me! He said he wanted to find me there when he came back. And the house caught fire, too. Oh, I would have been burned to death had not a young man burst in the door and took me out."

"Do you think your husband set fire to the house, madam?" the detective asked her.

She glared at him as if half stunned by the question. Finally she said:

"I don't know—I don't know," and she became silent, as if trying to think.

"Is your life insured, madam?"

"Yes, for \$5,000. Why do you ask?"

"Who is to get the money when you die?" he asked her.

"My husband," she replied, in a hollow tone of voice. "Oh, God, has it come to this?" and she moaned as if in great mental anguish.

"I think the mystery is solved, madam," the detective remarked. "He intended to destroy you and get the insurance on your life. If you will appear against him when we get him we'll land him behind the bars for ten years or so."

"Protect me from him and I will tell all," she replied.

"Give me his name and yours when you were married to him, and when insured," and the detective took pencil and paper and wrote down her replies.

Her name was Adele Caruthers, and her husband John Caruthers. They had been married but three years, and had come from New Haven but four weeks before.

The officer then left her in charge of the hospital nurse, with instructions to let no one see her but the doctors.

The police then began a systematic search for John Caruthers. But he could not be found. He had evidently made his escape from the city on the night of the fire.

Of course, Harry Thorne won more fame by his exploit. The insurance company in which Mrs. Caruthers was insured sent an agent to investigate the case, and he reported that Thorne's act had saved the company five thousand dollars, the amount of the policy, besides the life of the intended victim.

CHAPTER V.

HARRY PERFECTS AN INVENTION.

The saving of Mr. Caruthers' life, and the startling revelations that followed it, gave great prestige to Harry Thorne and the Old Put fire company. Everybody talked about them,

and again comparisons were made that were not pleasing to the steam fire companies.

Harry told it that one of the other firemen, whom he met coming out of the burning building, called to him:

"Come back! They're all out!"

Yet he went in and rescued the unfortunate woman whose romance had such a sad ending.

The three members of Brandon No. 2 Fire Company, who had attacked Harry and Tom one evening, were well-known young men about town. The result of that attack was such that they never mentioned it to any of their friends.

Theodore Cadmus was the leader of the three. He was the eldest son of a wealthy manufacturer whose mill was a half mile above the McCreary mills, on the left bank of the river. As his name had been mentioned in print as the one most active in blackballing Harry Thorne, when his name was before the company for election, much had been said that wounded his pride very deeply. He soon came to hate Thorne and the entire Old Put company with all the malice that wounded pride often begets.

But with the masses of the city the boy firemen had suddenly become idols. The working people looked upon them as their representatives in the Fire Department, though that branch of the city service had no official knowledge of their existence.

The engine house Mr. McCreary was building for them was nearing completion very fast. The boys met under the shed in the mill yard nightly, and talked about what they would do when they moved into it.

"Then you'll have to have a house-warming, boys," said old Uncle Bill Daly, who generally presided at their meetings under the shed. "You want to have a dance with your girls on opening night."

That took with the boys.

They went at it with a hurrah, and soon had a Committee of Arrangements appointed.

In two weeks the building would be ready for them.

"Everyone of you must hustle," said Harry to the committee, "for we want to bring our mothers and sisters and sweethearts to the opening dance at Old Put's headquarters."

In the meantime, Harry never neglected his work in the shop. He was always at his bench on time, and waited till the bell tapped at six o'clock in the evening. He well knew that the foreman was now no longer a friend, but an implacable enemy, and he had to be extremely careful lest some complaint be lodged against him.

One day he said to Mr. McCreary, who came round to where he was at work on a piece of hydraulic machinery:

"If I had a chance I could make a good improvement on this thing."

"In what way?" the mill owner asked him.

"By making two pieces do the work of four, thus lessening friction while increasing the power."

"That would be a decided improvement. Do you think you can do it?"

"Yes, sir. I've been thinking over it for a week."

"Very well. I'll see that you have the chance. Take a week off and let me know the result."

"But I can't lose a week, sir."

"You shall not lose one minute."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. McCreary instructed the foreman to give Harry's work to some other workman, and then let him have any tools and material he might want.

The foreman was surprised, but he had to obey. He went to Harry and asked:

"What game are you playing on the old man?"

"Wait and see," Harry replied.

"I want to know now. I don't intend to have any work going on here that I don't know anything about."

"Do you own this shop?" Harry asked.

"No, but I think I run it to some extent," was the reply.

"Yes, but you have a boss. You want to keep your eye on him and attend to your business."

"I don't want any advice from you."

"Then don't ask me for any."

"I haven't."

"Well, you want me to advise you of my plans," and Harry smiled. "I am going to do some special work for Mr. McCreary. That's all," and he turned to his work and left the foreman to nurse his wrath.

The foreman watched him all through the week, but not until he saw the little machine going did he really know what the young inventor was up to.

"So that is it, eh?" he said, as he stood by and watched it at work.

"Yes; what do you think of it?"

"Merely a toy."

Harry laughed, saying:

"I hope you'll tell the boss so."

"I will," and he turned on his heel and walked away.

Half an hour later the mill-owner came to him and said:

"The foreman says you have wasted a whole week on a toy. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let's have the secret of the improvement."

Harry then showed him the improvement he had made, saying:

"The machinery is less intricate, more simple, and double the horse power of the other one."

"Will it show that on trial?"

"I think it will, sir."

"Well, we'll see," and he ordered the foreman to test it.

"Have him test it in your presence, sir," Harry suggested. "Why?"

"He doesn't love me a bit," Harry replied.

The mill owner raised his eye-brows, but said nothing. He stood by and saw the test made. It did all that Harry claimed it would.

"It is all right," said McCreary, after the test ended. "How much do you want for the invention?"

"Why, it's yours, sir," Harry replied, somewhat surprised.

"No, the machine is mine, but the invention is yours. I'll give you \$1,000 for that."

"Whew! Do you mean it?"

"Of course I do. Is it a trade?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You can have the money whenever you want it," and the mill owner turned away and went to his office.

Harry looked at the foreman and laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" the foreman demanded.

"He said you reported I had wasted a whole week on a toy."

The foreman turned off without making any reply, and Harry went back to his bench.

But the news ran through the mills, and hundreds of workmen rushed over to see Harry and the machine, and congratulated him on his good fortune.

There was great rejoicing in the humble home of the Thones that evening when Harry told his parents of the good luck that had come to him.

"It is yours, mother," he said, "to do with as you please."

"I'll put it in bank till we get enough to buy a home," she replied.

After supper Harry hastened back to the mill yard to meet the boys. Old Bill Daly was telling them of Harry's invention,

and how the boss had done the handsome thing by him when he appeared at the gate.

They greeted him with a cheer, and made a rush to shake his hand.

There was no jealousy there. They were all brave fellows who rejoiced in the good fortune of any one of their number. Uncle Billy grasped his hand, slapped him on the back and said:

"Old Put's boys are proud of you, Harry, and I'm one of 'em!"

"So you are, Uncle Billy," replied Harry, "and we just couldn't get along without you. It was you who started us off right."

The old fireman was never so happy as when among the young firemen, who appreciated him so much.

Just as they were about to go home the firebell rang for the fourth district.

"Come, boys, quick!" cried Harry, and in thirty seconds from the first tap of the bell the boys and Old Put were off.

A bright light showed them where the fire was.

Boom!

Boom!

Two terrible explosions followed in quick succession, and the whole heavens seemed lit up.

On, on went the boys, and Old Put went thundering on behind them.

The explosions had shaken the city and thousands of citizens hurried forward to see what it meant.

"Faster! Faster!" called Harry through his trumpet, and the boys ran as if for their lives.

CHAPTER VI.

A MARVELOUS FEAT.

Boom!

Boom!

Explosions came thick and fast, and the lurid glare above that part of the city told of a terrible conflagration going on.

As the Old Put boys wheeled into Adams street, Brandon No. 2 came in abreast of them, and made an effort to crowd them with their pair of big horses.

The boys gave a wild yell and spurred ahead, waving their helmets as they went. The waving helmets scared the horses, and Old Put glided into the middle of the street, and thus kept the right of way.

The Brandon No. 2 boys were furious.

"Run 'em down!" cried Cadmus.

But the driver was a prudent man. He would do nothing to get himself or the company into trouble.

"Run 'em down!" yelled the foreman, in a furious rage.

"Run past 'em!"

"Turn 'em over!"

But only a minute or two more was required to reach the scene of conflagration where an immense crowd of people had assembled all in a state of frenzied excitement.

The cause of the explosions was evident to the firemen.

Barrels of naphtha and other oils had caught fire in a store, and in the stories above it lived three families whose retreat had been suddenly cut off.

Several of the terror-stricken inmates had leaped from the windows only to meet death on the hard, pitiless pavement. But that was preferable to the other fate behind them.

"On with the water!" cried Harry, and Old Put cast the first stream. In half a minute more the other three companies were on the ground.

"Up with the ladder!" called Harry, through his trumpet, as a woman and a babe appeared at a window.

A ladder was put up to a third story window, and Harry ran up it like a squirrel going up a tree.

He had to pass through a sheet of red flame that came from a second story window.

"Come back, Harry!" called a dozen firemen. "You can't make it!"

But he went through, with eyes and mouth shut, and reached the shrinking mother's side.

The flames were eating their way into the room behind her, and the room was filled with smoke.

All retreat by way of the stairs was cut off.

"Save me! Save my baby!" screamed the terror-stricken mother.

"Give me the baby! You run down the ladder!" he said to her, taking the baby from her arms.

"Oh, God!" she gasped, as she saw how the flames reached out from the window below and enveloped the ladder.

"If you go fast you can get through safely," he said to her, as he assisted her out on to the ladder.

Then with his trumpet he called out to those below:

"Stand by the ladder to catch her!"

A dozen of Old Put's boys sprang forward to obey, but the heat was too intense for flesh and blood to stand.

The flames were fed by thousands of gallons of oil, and so they stretched out long, fierce, pitiless tongues that devoured, destroyed everything within reach.

She went down till she struck the flames, and then she gave a wild, despairing shriek and fell to the ground.

Her fall was broken by one of the fireboys, and she escaped with a few burns and bruises.

Then Harry started to follow with the half-suffocated babe in his arms. Just as he was going to step out on the ladder it went down—burned in two in the middle!

At the same moment the ladder of Columbia Company went down in the same way.

They were the only two ladders on the ground!

A cry of horror went up from a thousand people.

Harry Thorne seemed doomed to a horrible death.

A brawny mechanic rushed as near to the burning building as the heat would let him, raised his hands above his head, and called out:

"Throw the child!"

Harry seemed dazed for a few moments, for he glared about him and then down at the sea of upturned faces.

Suddenly he was seen to lay the babe down on the floor at his feet, and seize the coil of asbestos cord at his belt.

The next moment he hurled the end with the iron hook on it far out into space.

The hook fell to the ground.

A rush was made to seize it.

But he quickly jerked it back and drew it up to him. Then he threw it again.

That time it caught over several wires of the telegraph line which ran along the street there.

He pulled hard on it, as if to test its hold. The hook held fast.

Then he picked up the babe again, and caught a firm hold on its clothing with his teeth.

He was seen to stand up in the window with a firm hold on the cord with both hands. Men held their breath in an awful suspense.

He sprang into space, and went whizzing through the air, out beyond the reach of the fiery tongues of flame, and shot downward, as if to crash among the horror-stricken people below. His feet almost touched their heads, and then he swung far out over the middle of the street like one in a high

swing. Then he swung back toward the crackling flames—then back again over the street—the babe firmly held by his teeth.

The boys pushed Old Put forward, and Sam Collins stood up and caught him as he swung back.

The roar that came up from the vast crowd, who saw that he was saved, was heard all over the city. It was like the roar of the sea in a storm.

Men gave way to the wild excitement of the moment, and screamed like lunatics.

It was a marvelous feat and a marvelous escape. Men's souls were electrified, and everything else for the moment was forgotten. The baby was placed in a fireman's hat, and borne aloft through the crowd to where the half-crazed mother had been taken.

She received it with a shriek of joy and pressed it to her bosom. She forgot her burns, her bruises and her terrible fright. What love is like a mother's love for her child?

As for Harry, he was not allowed again to take part in the battle against the raging fire that night.

The enthusiastic mob seized him, and bore him away on stalwart shoulders. They cheered and cheered. He begged in vain to be released.

"Let me join my company!" he called out to them.

"No, no! You've done enough!" cried scores of them in reply.

"Here's the mayor!" cried a voice, as the crowd surged up against an open barouche, in which sat the mayor of the city and the chief of police. They had come to see the extent of damage done by the explosions.

"Shake hands with him—shake hands with him!" cried the brawny workmen who held Harry, as they pressed up against the barouche.

The mayor, who had been an eye-witness of Harry's wonderful feat, stood up and reached out to him, saying:

"You are a hero, sir!"

"For God's sake pull me in!" said Harry, and the mayor and chief of police both laughed, as they extended their hands to him, and with a sudden exertion of force, landed him in the barouche with them.

The crowd howled, and Harry stood up and faced them.

"You're worse than the fire!" he sung out, and a roar of laughter came up to him.

"Hello!" exclaimed the chief of police, "the firemen are fighting each other!" and he blew a shrill blast on his whistle.

Harry turned and saw Brandon No. 2 and Old Put's boys engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. He gave a yell and sprang out of the barouche, landing on the heads and shoulders of the crowd about him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROW AT THE FIRE.

The mayor of Brandon and the chief of police sat in the barouche and gazed after Harry Thorne as he ran toward the open place in front of the burning building, stepping on the shoulders of the crowd as he went. They saw him leap to the ground and plunge into the fight between the two fire companies—Brandon No. 2 and Old Put.

Then it was that the chief blew his whistle for police aid to suppress the row. There was such a dense mass of humanity between him and the angry firemen that he could not hope to go to them himself.

The police who were near at the time undertook to put a stop to the trouble. But they might as well have attempted

to blow out the fire with their mouths, as over sixty firemen were engaged in the fight.

Harry met a Brandon No. 2 man and closed with him. He threw him and was pounding him when two other Brandon men jumped on him.

"Whoop!" yelled an Irishman in the crowd, who was itching to get mixed up in the row. "I'm wid de byes!" and he sailed in, and the famous Kilkenny cat fight was not a breeze to the ruction that followed.

Half a hundred brawny workmen attacked the Brandons, and in a couple of minutes put them to flight. Half a dozen were unable to run.

In the meantime a platoon of police arrived and dispersed the crowd.

Harry called out through his trumpet:

"Old Put to your post!"

Every boy fireman sprang to his post, and again a stream of water hissed through the hose and sputtered in the raging flames.

The police were busy trying to make arrests. The chief called out to them:

"Arrest no firemen, but keep the street clear of the crowd!"

That gave the firemen ample room for their battle with the flames. The entire block was threatened with destruction, and the mayor and chief of police became very uneasy in the presence of the danger, as the members of Brandon No. 2 had not returned to their engine.

The chief called up half a dozen officers and said to them:

"Hunt up Brandon No. 2 men and tell 'em to hurry back to their engine."

They hurried away in different directions in search of the firemen. Theodore Cadmus and two others were found in a drugstore having their bruises dressed.

"The mayor and chief of police have sent for you to work your engine," the officer said to them.

"No more fireman's work for me," said Cadmus. "The whole town might burn down before I would throw a stream of water on it!"

"That's me, too," said another.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" the officer asked. "Are you afraid of Old Put's boys?"

"No; we can take care of the boys, but when the citizens mob us that settles it."

"You won't go back?"

"No."

The officer hurried back and reported to the mayor and chief of police.

Both officials were astonished.

"I'll drive down there and see them myself," the mayor said.

The chief got out and the mayor drove hurriedly down the street to the drugstore, where the three firemen were.

"Good heavens, boys!" he exclaimed, rushing up to where they stood, "the city is in serious danger. You will ruin your good names if you refuse to do your duty as firemen."

"The citizens mobbed us. Now let 'em put out the fire," replied Cadmus.

"Yes, let 'em do it!" assented the others.

"You can't hold the whole city responsible for what a few men do," protested the mayor.

"A few! There was a thousand. They would have killed us, too."

"Yes, we had to run for it," put in the other two.

"Do your duty, and have the matter investigated afterwards," suggested the mayor.

"I've got enough. I am no longer a fireman. I resign. Let the mob do the saving of the town."

"Yes, let the mob do it," chimed in the other two.

"Oh, what foolish men!" exclaimed the mayor, as he turned away and left the drugstore.

"Gentlemen," said the druggist, "you have made the mistake of your lives."

"I don't think so," replied Cadmus. "When the citizens of a town mob me I am not going to throw any water on it when it burns, not if I know it."

"No, nor if I know it, either," assented the other two.

When the mayor returned to the fire he found that enough of Brandon No. 2 men had been secured to work the engine, and so four steady streams of water were pouring upon the flames.

But it was a hard fight, the hardest one the firemen of Brandon ever had. The immense quantity of oil that had been freed from barrels rendered all their efforts futile for a time. Water is always bound to win in the end, though, and so, after a four hours' fight and the loss of two buildings, the block was saved from utter destruction.

During that time the boys of Old Put Fire Company toiled at the pump with all their might and main. When the end came they were almost exhausted.

The result was, not one was able to go to his work the next morning.

But their employers found no fault with them on that account.

The foreman in the McCreary mills reported Harry's absence and charged him to a half day's lost time.

At noon Harry appeared at his bench.

As he entered the mill the 200 operatives there cheered him so lustily the bookkeepers and clerks in another building ran out to see what it was all about.

Mr. McCreary went to his bench and gave him his hand, saying:

"I didn't expect you would be able to work to-day, Harry. What you and the boys did last night was enough for a few days' rest."

"Thank you, sir," Harry replied. "I think some of the boys are in bed yet. I wasn't at the pump, sir!"

"No, but you were in a very dangerous position, I hear."

"Well, it was a pretty tight place," and Harry laughed, "and a pretty hot one, too."

"No doubt of that. But what started the fight among the firemen?"

"Well, I really don't know. I was with the mayor in his barouche when the fight began. I sprang out of the barouche and went to help our boys."

"It is a bad sign when the men on whom we must depend in times of peril like that was last night fall out and fight each other," and the great mill owner shook his head.

"Yes, sir. It isn't right. I am going to try and find out who began it when we meet again. Some of the members of Brandon No. 2 hate us on account of what the papers said about them a month ago. As we turned into the street leading to the fire last night, we got ahead of Brandon No. 2. It made 'em mad, for some of them called to their driver to 'run us down.' We went near about as fast as they could, and got the first stream going. I think that was what started the fight. At any rate, a very small thing is enough to start a row between the two companies, for they don't love each other in the least."

"It's too bad," muttered Harry to himself; "but it will be worse for those fellows if we meet 'em again unless they go slow."

Harry's exploit of saving the mother and baby was the theme of the entire city. Men, women and children talked about it. All the girls who had not seen him were eager to get a glimpse of him. Even the rich young ladies voted him a

hero, and all girls are more or less romantic about such things.

On the other hand, those of Brandon No. 2 who refused to return to their engine were denounced as cowards, jealous little boys, dandy firemen who lacked grit, etc., etc. Of course that did not make them feel kindly toward anybody. They claimed that a mob of citizens had attacked them, and that they were justified in leaving the engine; in fact, had to leave to save their lives.

That evening Tom Wilson explained how the fight began.

"Henry Orme was at Brandon No. 2's nozzle," he said, "both of us within ten feet of the curb when I stumbled, falling to my knees. In regaining my feet I turned my stream on him by accident. He yelled at me, and the next thing I knew I got a clip behind the ear that keeled me over. Then our boys went in for a grand layout. That's all I know about it."

"Do you know who hit you?" Harry asked him.

"No, but I think it was one of Brandon No. 2's boys."

"It was Arthur Gregg," said Sam Collins. "I saw him and went for him. That's how it began."

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY MEETS BABY BOWEN.

In the course of a few days all the facts about the trouble at the fire became known, and, as it was the result of an accident, the mayor succeeded in making peace between the angry firemen. Still he could not heal the breach made by the comments of the public on the gallant exploits of Harry Thorne. The other firemen became tired of hearing his praises sung by everybody.

The evening of the second day after the fire found Harry on his way home from the mill at his usual time. On the corner of the street, two blocks from his home, he met his sister Etta with nearly a score of other girls from the mill where she worked.

He was going to hurry by when Etta called to him, saying:

"Stop, Harry. These are all my friends, and they want to see you because you are willing to risk your life, even to save a baby!" And ere he could utter a word in reply he was surrounded and hemmed in by the girls.

"We all feel that you belong to the whole town, Harry," said a tall blonde of eighteen, "and wanted to see you and tell you how much we admire you for what you have done."

Harry blushed, laughed and said:

"Well, this is more pleasant than fighting a fire and a good deal more dangerous."

"How dangerous?" the blonde asked.

"I've heard a good deal about how bright eyes and rosy cheeks can ruin a fellow's peace of mind."

"Oh, oh, oh!" chorused the entire batch of girls, and a general laugh followed.

Etta then introduced him to each of the girls. To each one he extended an invitation to the opening entertainment of Old Put's Fire Company at their new quarters on the following Wednesday evening.

He managed to get away from the girls finally by pleading an engagement to meet the committee of arrangements immediately after supper. He shook hands with each girl and then escorted his sister home...

On the opening night of the new headquarters everything was in ship-shape. The first floor was the engine hall even with the ground, with a locker for each member in which to keep a change of uniform. The second was a large hall

for company meetings, with ante-rooms. The top floor was divided up into sleeping rooms for use of the members.

The two large halls were decorated in artistic style, and music was provided as well as refreshments.

A general invitation had been extended to all the friends of the company. Each member expected to bring his own relations, and they alone would have filled both halls. But within an hour after the door had been thrown open both halls were filled to overflowing, and half the boys' families had not yet arrived.

Old Uncle Bill Daly was master of ceremonies. The old man had been in similar scenes hundreds of times before, and knew just how to manage it.

He ordered the engine drawn out into the street and a guard placed in charge of it, in order that the lower hall might be used for dancing, too.

Of course all the ladies wanted to see Harry Thorne, and he was introduced to all of them. Every member was in a new uniform, and the forty uniforms made a pleasing appearance.

Finally the mayor and all the city officials arrived in a body, causing no little excitement among those present. Old Bill Daly escorted them to the head of the room amid great applause.

Harry went forward and grasped the mayor's hand, saying:

"We feel honored by this visit, Mr. Mayor. Had we known you were coming, we should have arranged to show how much we appreciated your presence here."

"That would have been quite unnecessary, my boy," the mayor replied. "Old Put Fire Company is an honor to the city, and we want you to know and feel it. We want you also to know that the city recognizes you as one of her best fire companies, and I urge each and all of you to cultivate a kindly feeling toward the other fire companies."

The boys had gathered round the mayor and the other officials, and when they heard what he said they broke into cheers. It was the first official recognition they had received, and naturally felt proud over it.

The mayor danced with Etta Thorne, and Harry with one of the girls who had come with her.

While they were dancing one of the boys came to Harry and said:

"Mrs. Brown and her baby are here. Come to her when this dance ends."

"Yes; tell her to wait."

"Oh, I do want to see that baby," said the young girl with whom Harry was dancing.

"Well, you may. We'll go to her when this set ends."

A few moments later the dance ended and Harry went in search of the mother and her babe. They found her surrounded by half a hundred women and girls, who seemed eager to fondle and kiss the little wee baby.

"Here's Harry!" cried some one, and the baby was passed over to him.

He took it in his arms, looked at its blue eyes and dimpled cheeks and said:

"Little girl, I'll never forget our first meeting as long as I live. I could not if I would and would not if I could. I expected to die with you in my arms, for I had no thought of leaving you behind. I wish you a long life and a happy one, and may you never feel as I did when I held you in my arms the first time," and he kissed each of the little dimpled cheeks while tears dimmed his eyes.

It was a gay scene all around him, but those who were near enough to catch his words hastily brushed tears away, as if surprised at their appearance. They knew his words came from his heart as he spoke to the babe. The mothers about

him caught the babe and nearly smothered it with loving kisses.

Harry had a tender side and the meeting with the babe had brought it out. Said the mother to him:

"You saved my life, too, Harry, and I'll see that she does not miss a word of the story when she is old enough to understand it."

"Thank you. Maybe I'll come courting her some day. Who knows?"

"If you do and she does not love you, I'll disown her," replied the happy mother, at which there was a hearty laugh.

The babe was the star of the evening. Everybody wanted to see it, and every girl in the hall had to kiss it. The rich women who came in their carriages to see Harry Thorne and the city officials took it in their arms and kissed it.

"Young as she is she has a history," said one matron as she held the infant in her arms.

Just at that moment a delegation of firemen came from Brandon No. 1 and Columbia companies. They were in full uniform, and the boys received them with cheers. Harry and the mayor shook hands with them.

But not a member from Brandon No. 2 was present.

The mayor shook his head as he was told it, saying:

"It is unfortunate that they will let their feelings become chronic with them. I shall see their foreman and talk with him to-morrow."

The dance continued to a late hour, and then the guests departed for their homes, having successfully started the boy firemen in their new quarters. Many of the boys escorted their girl friends to their homes, and then hurried back to sleep in the upper rooms.

Harry escorted a young lady to her home nearly a mile away from the hall. He had never met her until that evening, and he was quite pleased with her.

About half an hour before the guests began to disperse she said to Harry:

"My brother had to leave two hours ago, expecting to return for me. He has not done so. Will you please send some one with me if he does not return?"

"Let me see you home. My parents are here to look after my sister."

"It is kind of you, I am sure," she replied.

"A very great pleasure, Miss Martin," he returned.

Half an hour later he was walking with her toward her home, talking and laughing like two young people would under such circumstances.

He found that her home was out near the suburbs, and was quite surprised that her brother had left her to go such a distance alone.

At the gate of her cottage home she thanked him for his kindness, and hoped she would have the pleasure of meeting his sister again. He lifted his hat as he bade her good-night and hurried back toward the headquarters of Old Put Fire Company.

When about halfway he turned toward the river to gain some two or three blocks. Just as he turned into the river front street he met two men, who came out from under the dark shadow of one of the mills.

"Ah! Here he is!" cried one of them, making a grab at Harry's arm.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Harry.

The next moment he felt a crushing blow on the back of his head, a flash of stars before his eyes and he fell forward to the ground.

When he came to he felt himself being dragged toward the river.

He tried to free himself from their grasp, and a desperate

hand-to-hand fight ensued. In the struggle he bit off the first joint of a finger on the hand of one of them, spat it out, and was then knocked senseless again.

He knew no more until he felt the cold waters of the river about him. He had been cast from the foot bridge into the seething current that boiled and foamed over the rocks.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY.

He felt the strong current bearing him swiftly over the bed of rocks, for now and then he rubbed against one, and then passed on into deep water again.

Suddenly he struck squarely against one, and the current pressed against him, as though trying to break him in two.

By that time he had fully recovered his wits.

He knew where he was and the danger that menaced him.

Grasping a jagged edge of the rock, he held on to it till he could regain his strength somewhat. Then he slowly pulled himself upon the rock and almost out of the water.

There he sat, with the water boiling, roaring, foaming about him, at least fifty feet from the nearest point on either side. In the darkness he could only see the outlines of the great mills on the right bank of the river. It would be useless to call for help, for nobody was about there at that late hour, and the roar of the waters as they dashed over the rocks would prevent any one in the houses way up on the hill from hearing him.

"I'll have to stay here all night," he said, as he tried to draw his feet up out of the water.

Then he felt a sharp pain on the back of his head. Putting his hand there, he found quite a lump, caused by the blow that had downed him. He found a second one, caused by another blow.

"It's a good thing to have a hard head," he thought as he tried to recollect the whole occurrence; "otherwise I'd have been killed. Who were they, and why did they attack me? Could they have been waiting for me there? No, for nobody could have figured out that I would come round that way. They mistook me for some other fellow—a fireman, too, for they could see that I was one."

He sat there for an hour, shivering in the cold night air. Then he saw that the moon was rising.

"Ah, I may see a way to get out of this when the moon gets up," he said as he watched the gray streaks in the east.

Another hour passed, and the silvery moonlight revealed to him numerous black spots in the white foam on the waters. He knew they were rocks.

He slid down into the water up to his waist, and made his way to the one nearest him. The current came near taking him away, but he got there at last and climbed upon one higher than the one he had just left.

A few minutes later he slid off into the water again, and this time he had to swim, for it was deep. He missed the rock he was trying to reach and struck another one lower down.

Beyond that one the current was not so strong, so he managed to swim to the shore and climb up to a dry spot where he could lie and rest.

But he rested only long enough to recover his wind. That done, he rose to his feet and made his way up to the street on that side of the river.

Going up the street a couple of hundred yards, he came to the foot-bridge from which he had evidently been thrown.

Crossing over to the other side, he hurried on in the direction of the McCreary mills.

Arriving at the mills, he looked around for Uncle Bill Daly, the watchman. He soon found him.

"What do you want here" the old man asked him.

"Uncle Billy," Harry said to him, "I've been half killed."

"Good Lord, Harry!" the old man exclaimed. "What's happened? Who did it?"

"Two men knocked me on the head and threw me into the river for dead. Let me go to your room and get warmed up."

"My room is too cold. You must go upstairs where the boys are. It's warm up there. Lord bless me, who could have done it?"

"That's what I'd like to know," Harry replied, as he followed the old man round to the Old Put engine-house. There the boys were aroused and he was soon admitted and led upstairs.

His appearance, hatless, wet and bleeding from a wound on the head, created the most intense excitement among the boys.

"Who did it?"

"How many attacked you?"

"Where was it?"

"Were they Brandon No. 2 men?"

"We'll smash the whole gang!"

Harry waited till he was stripped of his wet clothing and placed in a warm bed ere he undertook to tell the whole story of his adventure. He then told it while Uncle Billy examined his wounds.

Not one of them knew Miss Martin, though they remembered seeing her in the crowd—a very beautiful girl.

"I am sure they were laying for somebody else," Harry said, "for I had no idea of going round that way at all. Do I need a doctor, Uncle Billy?"

"No, not unless you fell that your skull is cracked."

"Don't know whether it is or not. It feels sore enough."

"Yes. Your helmet saved your life, Harry."

Six of the boys went out and up to the place where the attack was made, hoping to find some clew to the villains. But they returned within an hour to say they found nobody about there.

Early the next morning Harry got up and put on the same suit he wore the night before, which had been dried by the stove while he slept, and went home to breakfast, wearing a hat borrowed from one of the boys. There he told what had happened to him. His mother and sister were worried. His father insisted that the two villains had been hired to kill him, and advised him to go and tell the chief of police about it at once.

"I don't believe they were looking for me at all," Harry said. "No one could have known that I was going home with Miss Martin."

"You don't know that. Who is Miss Martin? We never heard of her before."

"I never heard of her, I'm sure," said Etta, shaking her head.

"There are thousands of people in Brandon whose names we don't know," Harry said.

"Of course. But whether they were looking for you or not, they ought to be punished."

"Yes, of course," and Harry made up his mind to report the matter to the chief of police as soon as possible.

But the chief soon heard of it. The boys told the story in their homes when they went to breakfast, and in a very little while the whole city was discussing it.

Harry remained at home during the day and sent for a physician to examine his hurts. The doctor told him he had

made a very narrow escape, and that the helmet he wore that night had probably saved his life.

"That's what Uncle Billy said," he replied. "I am glad I had it on."

In the evening, Harry went back to the company headquarters and received an ovation from the boys. He went to remain all night. Old Bill Daly made him go to bed at ten o'clock.

But at one o'clock in the night they were aroused by the great fire bell.

The boys sprang up, dressed, and were downstairs in one minute. It was their first call after going into their new quarters, and they were eager to make a record there.

Harry took a helmet belonging to another, and sprang down the two flights, trumpet in hand, ready to lead the way.

"Do your best, boys!" he cried, as he dashed out into the street, the engine thundering after him.

They ran at full speed a quarter of a mile ere they made a turn. Then Harry saw that the fire was in one of the aristocratic portions of the town. Two minutes more and they were on the scene of conflagration.

It was a large mansion. Men, women and children had run out in their night clothes. The Old Put fire boys were the first on the ground, as they were the only one who slept at company headquarters.

The house was nearly enveloped in flames when a scream at an upper window was heard. Harry saw a white-robed figure there with disheveled hair and outstretched arms crying:

"Save me! Oh, save me!"

"Up with the ladder!" cried Harry, and it was up in an instant.

Then he ran up to the window with lightning speed and sprang inside. The girl had disappeared within.

"Here! Here! Come here!" he called, and then he darted forward in search of her, going through into another room.

He found her wandering about in a dazed condition, blinded by smoke and quite speechless from terror.

"Here! Come! I'll save you!" he cried, catching her round the waist and trying to lead her into the room through which he had just come.

The sound of his voice seemed to recall her wandering wits, for she threw her arms about his neck and cried out:

"Save me! Oh, save me!"

She clung to him in such a way he could not well make her walk, or she did not understand him. She simply clung to him as her last and only hope for life.

Harry knew the value of a single second of time in such situations. He lifted her in his arms to bear her to the window, and found her very heavy—a solid girl of 150 pounds weight.

Just as he entered the room the furniture caught fire, and the whole space became a living blaze. To advance was death—to retreat was to lose the ladder!

"God help us!" he gasped, as he removed his helmet and pushed it down over her head to save her hair.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY GETS HURT AND SAVES A LIFE.

As the minutes passed and Harry did not reappear at the window, the firemen became alarmed.

Tom Wilson turned the stream of water into that room.

But the dense volume of smoke that had been pouring out

from there changed to red tongues of flame, and a cry of horror went up from Old Put's boys.

Two other fire companies dashed up and turned on streams. Brandon No. 2 was unusually active. Theodore Cadmus ran wildly about, crying out:

"Are they all out? Are they all out?"

"No, no!" cried some of the servants. "Miss Edith is in there!"

"Oh, God!" and he seemed paralyzed with horror.

Then he seemed to recover himself, and made a dash for the ladder up which Harry had gone.

"Come back—come back, man!" called the foreman of Brandon No. 2.

He hesitated.

Two of his comrades sprang up the ladder and pulled him down.

"Oh, God, she is lost!" he groaned, as he came down.

"Harry Thorne is up there!" cried someone in the crowd.

"Harry is lost!" cried Sam Collins, unable to hold in any longer.

At this moment Columbia Fire Company dashed up to the scene and got a stream going.

A crowd had gathered, late as was the hour, and it was soon known that Harry was lost in the flames. The horror and grief that swept over the crowd of spectators was heard by every fireman on the ground.

But where was Harry?

On finding his exit whence he came shut off he turned into another room, bearing the half-unconscious girl in his arms.

He found two windows there, but both closed.

Opening one of them, he looked out upon the roof of an extension nearly ten feet below.

It was his only chance.

Gathering the girl in his arms he made the leap.

They landed on the roof all in a heap, both bruised and half-stunned.

Better that than the fire.

In trying to recover himself his foot slipped and they fell—rolled off the roof to the roof of a piazza which ran along the extension. Ere they could get a hold on anything they rolled off and fell to the ground—Harry underneath the girl.

The fall stunned him to unconsciousness. But the shock seemed to restore the girl to all her senses.

She sprang up, seized him by the arm, and was dragging him away from the building when a fireman discovered them. She was in her night-dress, barefooted, and had Harry's helmet on her head.

He gave a shout of:

"Here they are!" and ran to their assistance.

Instantly a score of firemen ran around to that side of the house, and a great shout went up.

"They are saved!"

The girl was taken quickly to the house of a neighbor, and Harry to a drug-store on the next street, where he was restored to consciousness by a physician.

The four streams of water soon squelched the flames, and the house was not so badly damaged but it could be repaired, and made good as new by skilled workmen.

It was the residence of Judge Maitland, one of the wealthiest men in Brandon, and the girl whom Harry had saved was his daughter Edith, considered the belle of the city.

On hearing that she had been saved, Theodore Cadmus became so weak and faint he sank down to the ground. The reaction had been too much for him. He had been courting her for months.

Harry was so badly hurt by the fall from the roof of the piazza, with a 150-pound girl on top of him, he had to be taken

home by the boys of Old Put company, and the doctor summoned.

The doctor examined him and said:

"See here, Harry, twice in twenty hours is a little too much. Last night you were knocked on the head and thrown into the river for dead. To-night you fall off the roof of a house. That's enough for one of your age. Don't run to any more fires now till I tell you to do so. You are badly hurt and must keep to your bed for a while."

"I am good at obeying orders, doctor," he replied. "I know I am badly hurt, for I feel it all over me."

"Of course you do," and the doctor, aided by Harry's mother, fixed him up so as to make him comfortable until he could call again.

It was another case of heroic rescue, and the town rang with the praises of the daring young fireman.

Edith Maitland was bruised in many places, but in no way was she badly hurt. She talked lively the next day:

"That young fireman saved my life. He was so considerate, too. He placed his fireman's hat on my head, and thus saved my hair. Oh, I shall never forget him as long as I live! I'll keep that hat and buy him another one. I would not part with it for a thousand dollars. Why, when we fell off the piazza roof I felt him turn me so as to save me from being hurt."

About ten o'clock that morning, Judge Maitland's carriage stopped in front of the humble home of the Thorne's, and the judge himself descended from it.

Etta Thorne met him at the door. She had to stay home from the mill to aid her mother. Her father had to go to work for fear of want, being the result of the mishap to Harry.

"Is this where Harry Thorne lives?" the judge asked.

"Yes, sir. Will you come in?" and she held the door open for him, though she did not know who he was.

"Yes, thank you. I want to see Harry. I am the man whose daughter he saved at the fire last night."

"You are Judge Maitland?"

"Yes—and you are Harry's sister, are you not?" and the judge extended his hand to her. She placed her little brown hand in his, and led the way into the little parlor.

He sat down, and Etta hastened to tell her mother and Harry of the judge's visit. Mrs. Thorne was quite overcome, but Harry said:

"Show him in, mother. He wants to see me, of course. That's natural."

Woman-like, the mother had to tidy up the room a little, and then Etta showed the judge in.

There was very little nonsense about Judge Maitland. He was a man of the world, of talent, and great social and political power.

"Harry, my brave fellow," he said, as he extended his hand to the young fireman, "I am sorry to find you hurt, and came to see if you were. You saved my daughter's life at the risk of losing your own, and I believe I know how to appreciate a thing like that."

"I am glad I was able to do it, judge," Harry replied. "But isn't she hurt, too?"

"Considerably bruised, but not much hurt. She's lively as a cricket, and sent me to see how you were. She says she fell on you and knocked all the wind out of you."

Harry laughed and said:

"So she did, but that's better than having it burnt out of me."

"Yes, yes, good!" and he gave a hearty laugh that rang all through the house.

"I am glad she escaped so well," Harry finally remarked. "Do you know what became of my hat?"

"Yes. She has it. Says she's going to keep it. Told me to buy you a new one. It saved her hair. She thinks a good deal of her hair, and still more of you for saving it for her."

"Well, I lost one night before last, and another last night. I would buy a dozen were I able."

"I'll buy you a gross of them if you say so, my boy."

"Oh, I guess one will do," and Harry laughed over the offer so heartily made.

"See here, Mrs. Thorne," said the judge, turning to Harry's mother. "Keep this boy at home till he is well and strong again, and send all your bills to me—all of them—and don't feel hurt about it. He would not have been hurt but for my daughter. I am able to pay, and will be as mad as a hornet if you don't let me pay," and he picked up his hat to leave.

Extending his hand to Harry he said, in his brusque way:

"I am your friend, Harry Thorne. Don't forget that. Come and see me when you get out again. I'll call again in a few days. Good-day," and bowing to Mrs. Thorne and Etta, he left the house and re-entered his carriage.

"He's a big-hearted man," said Harry. "I like him."

"So do I," said his sister. "I hope his daughter is like him."

"She is—in weight," and Harry smiled. She had impressed that fact very heavily on his mind and body.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JUDGE'S DAUGHTER.

Several days passed, and Harry was still in bed from his hurts. Every member of Old Put company had been to see him. He was really very sore, and the doctor insisted that it was dangerous for him to exert himself in any way for some time.

One afternoon the Maitland carriage drove up in front of the cottage and Mrs. Maitland and her daughter alighted from it. They entered and were greeted by Etta at the door.

"I am Mrs. Maitland," said the elderly lady, introducing herself, "and this is my daughter. You are Miss Thorne, I presume?"

"Yes," Etta replied, in her shy, modest way. "Come in, please," and she led the way into the little parlor.

"How is your brother?" Mrs. Maitland asked.

"He is slowly recovering, thanks."

"Can we see him? Is he well enough to see visitors?"

"Oh, yes. I'll tell mother," and she went out to inform her mother and Harry of their arrival.

She soon returned and led the way to Harry's room.

Edith went up to the bedside, and said, as she extended her hand:

"I am sure we don't need any introduction, Mr. Thorne. We have met before."

"Yes," he replied, "and in a very warm place."

"Yes, indeed. This is my mother. You have never met her before," and Harry shook hands with the judge's wife.

After some minutes Edith said:

"I want to ask you a question. May I?"

"Of course. As many as you please."

"Did you ask papa if I weighed a thousand pounds."

"Bless you, no!" and then he laughed, for he saw that the judge had been having some fun with her.

She laughed, too, and added:

"Well, I am glad you did not. I could hardly forgive that. But, really, I am sorry you were so badly hurt. I am sure it was my own fault that—"

"Indeed, no!" he replied, interrupting her. "It was an accident. I am sure it was my own awkwardness that caused it."

"I really don't know. I recollect you putting your hat on my head and pushing my hair up under it. How in the world could you have been so considerate in such a moment? I am going to have a watch-chain made of my hair and you must wear it—will you?"

"As long as I live," he replied.

"May I keep the hat?"

"Yes, if you wish to."

"I do wish to. I want to keep it as long as I live."

She was jolly like her father, and Etta and her mother liked her very much, as she was free from the air and manner of most wealthy young ladies. As for Harry, he was charmed with her frankness and unconventional ways.

As the two ladies were leaving, Edith kissed Etta and said: "I like you and want to come and see you. Will you let me do so?"

"Why, yes—of course; but I have to work every day, and—"

"That makes no difference. I'd have to work too if my father were not able to take care of us. Some day your fortune will change. Harry is a great inventor, I hear, and he'll make a fortune for all of you."

"Oh, I hope so."

When they were gone, Mrs. Thorne exclaimed:

"Well, I never met such pleasant people in all my life before. She isn't one bit proud or stuck up."

"No, and she is just as nice as she can be," put in Etta. "I do hope she will come to see us, for I do like her ever so much."

"And she is beautiful, too!"

"Yes, so she is," assented Harry. "But dress up little sister, and she would be more beautiful, I think."

"Oh, pshaw, brother!" and Etta tried to appear indifferent to the compliment, but she was pleased all the same.

The visit did Harry good, however, for it convinced him that what he had done was appreciated. It gave him pleasant thoughts, which made his confinement less irksome to him.

He soon began to sit up or move about his room. Then he ventured into the little parlor and sat in a big armchair.

"Oh, brother!" cried Etta, running into the parlor with a big bouquet of hot-house flowers in her hand, "just see what lovely flowers she has sent you! The coachman says she wants to know how you are to-day?"

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Why, Miss Maitland!"

"Oh, let me see them," and he took the flowers and inhaled their perfume for at least a minute or two ere he spoke again.

Finally he said:

"I think I ought to write a note and thank her for these flowers."

"Yes, of course," and his sister hastened to procure writing material for him, which she placed on a little table, and drew it up alongside his armchair. He took up the pen and wrote:

"Dear Miss Maitland: What a physician you are! Your very presence cures as if by magic. After the visit of yourself and your mother I began to grow better, until now I am sitting up and able to write my unfeigned thanks for the honor and blessing you have conferred upon me. These flowers are like yourself—beautiful and fragrant—and their presence in my room will soon enable me to report for duty again. I beg you will accept my heartfelt thanks for your continued kindness and condescension, and believe me sincerely

"Your obedient servant,

"Harry Thorne."

"Here, sister, see if this will do," he said to Etta, when he had finished writing.

She read it and exclaimed:

"Oh, how beautiful! Why, I didn't know you could write so well. Oh, my! she'll be pleased with it!"

Harry laughed, sealed and addressed the note, which she took out to the coachman.

That evening Tom Wilson came to see him, and among other bits of news, said to him:

"The talk is that Theodore Cadmus has been courting Miss Maitland for months, and when she tells him how you saved her life he just goes all to pieces. The whole town knows how he doesn't love you a bit."

"Poor fellow," said Harry, "it is rather rough on him. I heard that he tried to go into the building after her when he was told that she was still in there."

"Yes, I saw the firemen catch and hold him. He would have gone in, I honestly believe, for he seemed perfectly crazy. Judge Maitland has been down to see us."

Just then Mrs. Thorne came in with a box which had come for Harry from New York. Tom opened it, and a fine silver trumpet lay before them.

"Whew! What a beauty!" Harry exclaimed, as Tom took it up.

"From Judge Maitland, by George!" Tom burst out, as he read the inscription on it.

Harry took it, examined it in silence for some minutes, and then said:

"I am glad to have it."

CHAPTER XII.

HARRY AND THE FOREMAN.

At the end of two weeks from the time of the Maitland fire Harry was able to return to the shop. Mr. McCreary greeted him kindly, and told him his wages for two weeks awaited him in the mill office.

"But I have not worked any in two weeks, sir," Harry replied.

"When one of my men is hurt in the discharge of duty his wages goes on all the same," said the mill owner.

"Well, I shall never be ungrateful to you, Mr. McCreary."

"I am not afraid of that, Harry. By the way, the detectives have not been able to find out anything about the attack that was made on you the night before the Maitland fire."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"Yes, so am I. The scoundrels ought to be found out and punished."

"Perhaps they may be some day. I don't believe they were lying for me, though, sir."

"Maybe not; but that does not make their crime less heinous."

"No, not a bit."

Harry went to work at his bench. But the foreman did not go about him or speak to him. But he did not mind that in the least.

The next day, however, the foreman came to him and said:

"I want you to be more careful; you are slighting your work."

"You are mistaken; I am not slighting my work!"

"But I say you are!"

"Well, that doesn't make it."

"Do you mean to say I lie?"

"I mean to say just what I said, and you can construe it to suit yourself."

"You are discharged—leave the shop at once!"

"I shall report to Mr. McCreary in the office," said Harry, and he forthwith repaired to the office, where he reported what had taken place in the shop.

Mr. McCreary sent for the foreman to report in the office. The foreman came, and when questioned, declared that Harry slighted his work.

"That is not like him," said the mill owner. "Bring me a piece of work he has slighted; I want to see it. I won't have any man discharged without good cause."

"Come and see the work. It cannot be brought in here, sir."

"Come along, Harry," said the owner to Harry, and all three went back to the shop. The foreman led the way to where a piece of machinery was being put together. As many as a dozen workmen had made pieces for it. He took up a piece, held it up before the mill owner, and asked:

"What do you think of that?"

"But I didn't make that," said Harry before Mr. McCreary could reply.

"Yes, you did," said the foreman.

"But I did not, and you know it as well as I do," and Harry looked him full in the face as he spoke. "That was not my part at all. I made those piston locks there. Someone else made that."

McCreary looked sternly at the foreman and said:

"I want to know who made those piston locks. Send for the man who made them."

"Harry made those and these two," was the reply.

"Send for Joe Martin who works alongside of me," said Harry, "and you can find out if I ever made any such things at my bench."

Joe was sent for, and his story agreed with Harry's.

"Mr. Foreman, you owe Harry Thorne an apology," said the mill owner. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I may have made a mistake, sir," the foreman replied.

"You have made a very serious mistake," and McCreary shook his head.

"I thought it was his work, sir."

"I can't believe that. You must have known whose work it was, or else you have been negligent yourself. You dislike the young man, and have sought to injure him in a very mean way. I think you had better resign your position at once," and with that the mill owner turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Harry and the foreman standing face to face.

They glared at each other for a minute or so, and then Harry turned and made his way back to his work-bench.

Just as he reached the bench he heard the great fire bell ring out an alarm of fire.

Harry bounded through the nearest doorway, followed by at least a dozen young fellows who worked in the same shop with him. They ran across the mill yard to the rear of the engine quarters, and rushed in, donned their helmets, seized the ropes, and dashed out at full speed.

It was in the middle of the afternoon, and hundreds of people stopped to see the Old Put boys go by, some giving them a cheer as they thundered along the street.

The fire was in a neat new cottage, and had been caused by the ignition of a can of oil which had been upset by someone in the family.

The Old Put company was the first to the fire, being the nearest at the start. The oil had spread all over the floor of one room, and was in a blaze. The distracted mother did not know where all her children were—in the house or outdoors.

She seized her babe and ran out into the street with it. Then she believed the next youngest was upstairs, and so she

hurried back into the house, shrieking and screaming at the top of her voice.

When Harry got there she was in the house upstairs looking everywhere for her children. He dashed into the house, ran up the stairs through a dense cloud of smoke, and found her on her knees feeling under the bed for one of her children.

"Come—let's get out before it's too late!" he cried, seizing her by the arm.

"My child! Save my child!" she cried in reply to him.

"Where is it? Tell me!"

"I don't know—looking for her!" and she pulled loose from him and again went feeling round under the bed for her child.

"There's no child in this room, madam," he called out to her. "Come, let's get out. Our boys have gotten all your children out! Come on before it's too late!" and he caught hold of her again.

She pulled fiercely away, crying out in agonized tones:

"My child! Save my child!"

"Come—here's your child! This way—quick!" he cried, pulling her by the arm again.

To his utter amazement she hurled him aside as though she had the strength of a giant, screaming:

"Save my child!"

He rushed to her again, caught her round the waist, lifted her off her feet and ran out to the head of the stairs with her.

She was heavy and muscular, and in the twinkling of an eye she turned on him, though borne in his arms, gave a wild scream like a maniac, grasped him by the throat, and choked him till his tongue protruded and his eyes stood out on his cheeks.

He released his hold on her.

But she did not release her hold on him, and his desperate struggle to free himself from her death clutch sent them both tumbling headlong down the flight of stairs.

He succeeded in tearing loose from her grasp, however. Yet he would not leave her to be roasted. He seized her by the skirts and tried to drag her out by main force. She seemed endowed with superhuman strength. She tore loose from him, sprang to her feet, caught him in her arms, and ran screaming into the very room where the fire began, now a flaming furnace.

CHAPTER XIII.

"IT WAS THE FOREMAN'S HOUSE!"

For the first time in his life Harry Thorne felt that he was being punished for trying to do a good deed.

The woman had evidently lost her reason, and, like a horse in a burning stable, was determined to stay and perish in the flames. And it seemed as though he would have to stay there and perish with her, for she held on to him like grim death.

He struggled and fought with her. He was even fierce and savage in his desperation. But still she hung on, and then their clothing took fire.

All the time she was crying out:

"Save my child! Save my child!"

Harry was on the eve of giving up in despair when he felt and heard two other firemen assisting him. He could not see, blinded by flames and smoke.

"Help me get her out!" he gasped.

He felt himself pulled along and hustled out, then he knew no more till he opened his eyes, lying on the pavement on the other side of the street from the fire.

Two of the Old Put fire boys had gone in and brought him and the woman out.

They had also suppressed the fire so that most of the damage was in the room in which it had started.

"Did you save her?" he asked, as soon as he came to.

"Yes," replied Sam Collins; "but she's way off—crazy as a loon!"

"That's what I thought. Lord, but she fought me like a tiger! She was too much for me."

"It took four of us to hold her after we got her out," said one of the boys. "Her clothes were on fire, and she is badly burned."

"So am I," and a look of pain came into his face.

"Then you want to be attended to at once. Here, get up and let us take you home."

They lifted him to his feet and placed him on the engine. The boys took hold of the rope and went down the street at a breakneck pace.

Only his mother was at home, and she burst into tears when he came in, saying:

"Oh, Harry, Harry! You must leave the fire company. I can't stand this awful suspense. I am doomed to see you brought home burned to a crisp some day."

"No danger of that, mother," he said. "I am just scorched a little."

She prepared his room for him, and one of the boys ran for a doctor.

The engine was taken back to its house, and the boys went to work in the shops again.

The doctor prescribed simple remedies for burns, and told Harry he'd feel sore for a few days, but was all right otherwise.

Harry then told his mother of his terrific struggle with a woman who was crazed over the fear that one of her children was in the burning building.

"The poor thing! A mother would die for her child," said Mrs. Thorne.

"I am sure she would have done so," Harry replied. "She threw me about as though I were but a ten-year-old child. If some of the boys had not run in to help me we'd have been roasted. Do you know the foreman discharged me just before the fire bell rang?"

"No!" and it came with a gasp.

"Yes; but Mr. McCreary told him he had better resign himself when he heard how it was. The foreman hates me, but the boss is my friend," and Harry related the whole story to his mother.

That evening Tom Wilson came up to see him. He burst into the room with:

"Harry, old fellow, do you know whose house it was?"

"No, whose was it?"

"The foreman's—the man who discharged you to-day."

"Good Lord!" gasped Harry.

"Yes, I've seen him. He didn't know anything about it till it was all over. He looks meaner than a dog who has been caught sucking eggs."

Harry laughed.

"Well, it pays me for these burns. Have you heard how his wife is?"

"They say she has recovered her wits, but is badly burned."

"I knew she was burned. I don't want to tackle another one like her. Lord, but she knocked me around in a way that makes my head swim to think about it."

The next day Miss Edith Maitland came in her carriage.

"Oh, Mrs. Thorne! I heard that Harry was hurt again. I saw it in the papers. Is he badly hurt?"

"He was burned in several places," replied Mrs. Thorne, as she led her into the parlor.

"May I see him?"

"Why, yes, of course."

In a few minutes Harry was ready to go into the parlor, for his burns did not prevent his dressing himself and walking about the house.

As he entered she sprang up and said:

"Why, you are not so badly hurt!"

"No, just nipped in a few places," he said, laughing, as he shook hands with her and led her back to her seat. "If a few burns will bring me the honor of a visit from you, though, I'll go right in and get 'em every time the fire bells ring."

"Well, if you do, and I find it out, I'll cut your acquaintance," she retorted. "Why don't you take care of yourself as the other firemen do?"

"That's just what I asked him last night," said Mrs. Thorne.

"I did try to yesterday," Harry answered, "but I had a crazy woman to deal with. Instead of taking her out she took me in—right into the hottest part of the fire. Oh, it takes a woman to get a fellow into trouble."

They laughed heartily, and Miss Maitland said:

"I am so glad to see you in such good humor. I was afraid you were suffering awfully."

"I did suffer terribly last night, but the doctor has stopped the pain and only the soreness remains. I can stand a good deal of pain, but am not fond of it, by any means."

"No one is. I don't see how you can go into the flames as you do."

"I never go unless there is some great incentive—a human life or something like that."

"There are few who would do so even then."

"Oh, I think there are a good many. I heard that the firemen had to hold Mr. Cadmus back to keep him from rushing headlong to certain death when he heard you were in the flames."

"Yes, I heard so, too, but I hardly think he would have done so. I had a dreadful quarrel with him the other day."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"Well, you needn't be. It was all about you. He was jealous because I sent you some flowers. I told him I intended to ask you for a photograph of yourself, as I wanted it for my album. I hope you will give me one, as I want to show it to all my friends as the man who saved my life. Have you got one?"

"I will have one taken just as soon as I get out again," he replied. "Will you give me one of yourself?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"I do wish it—wish it above all things. It would be a priceless treasure to me."

"Then you shall have one. I want to ask you a question, Harry. You won't be offended, will you?"

"No, indeed," and he seemed very much surprised.

Mrs. Thorne had left the room and they were alone together.

"Did you write me that note you sent me the other day?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "Why?"

"Because it was the most beautiful note I ever read. I was afraid somebody had helped you to write it."

"I wrote every word of it, and no one saw it but little sister. I asked her if it was all right. She read it and said it would do. I wrote as I felt, and was afterward afraid you might think me bold or presumptuous."

"I am so glad you said that—that you wrote as you felt. I—I—felt every word of it."

"So did I," and then a silence followed that lasted some minutes.

They were fast falling in love, but neither knew it.

Half an hour later Miss Maitland took leave of Harry and his mother, and went down the street, her cheeks aglow, her eyes sparkling and heart in a great flutter.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHALLENGE AND THE RESULT.

A week after the fire in which Harry had such a struggle with a crazy mother he reported for duty again in the shops of the McCreary mills. As he went to his bench the foreman, whom he thought had resigned from his position, came toward him with outstretched hand, saying:

"Shake hands, Harry. I owe you an apology as well as a debt of gratitude. Henceforth I am your friend at all times and under all circumstances."

"I am glad to hear you say that," Harry replied, as he shook his hand. "No apology is necessary. I never bore you any ill-will. I am glad you did not leave the shops. I did not suggest such a thing."

"I know you did not. My wife wants to see you. You must go up home with me some evening soon."

"I shall be glad to do so."

Thus the foreman became his fast friend, and Harry felt all the better for it.

It was on the evening following his reconciliation with the foreman that Harry had occasion to go over across town to see a young friend who was ill. He remained till quite a late hour. On his way back he stopped in at a confectioner's and had a plate of ice cream.

No one knew him there.

He was seated at a table eating a dish of ice cream when Theodore Cadmus and another member of Brandon No. 2 came in. He did not know Cadmus' companion, but remembered having seen him in the company at some of the fires.

Cadmus did not see Harry until after he sat down and gave his order. Then he glanced around and saw him.

He gave a start as if stung and glared at the young fireman.

Harry did not seem to notice him at all.

"What's he doing over on this side of town, I wonder?" Cadmus said to his companion.

"Can't say," replied the other, shaking his head.

Harry did not hear them and didn't seem to care to.

A poor man came in to beg. He passed unnoticed and went to Cadmus' table.

"No," said Cadmus. "There's one of your kind over there. Go to him. Perhaps he'll give you something," and he directed him to Harry's table. Harry heard it all.

He coolly gave the feeble old man a quarter of a dollar, saying:

"Men give, but monkeys jeer,
And cowards taunt where there's no fear."

Cadmus heard the couplet and sprang to his feet.

"Did you mean that for me?" he demanded.

"I did. Shall I repeat it for you?" and Harry rose to his feet and confronted him.

Cadmus aimed a blow at him.

Harry parried it and dealt him one on the left eye that

staggered him. Ere he could recover he dealt him another. Then Cadmus' companion rushed at him. Harry seized a heavy ice pitcher on one of the tables and smashed it full in his face. He went down in a heap, with pieces of the pitcher for company.

By that time the proprietor and waiters interfered and prevented any further hostilities.

"I want pay for my pitcher," the proprietor demanded.

"How much?" Harry asked.

"One dollar and a half," was the reply.

Harry paid it.

Cadmus wanted to fight again. The fellow who got the pitcher in his face was almost ruined and had enough.

"Gentlemen, you must not fight in my place!" cried the proprietor. "I am sorry—very sorry it happened, but you must not fight in my place."

"Cadmus, I want to give you a good thrashing," said Harry. "You are a miserable sneak and coward. You would not have insulted me had you been alone. Just name a place where you will meet me and give me a chance to get at you without any one interfering."

"Over the Canada border, and with pistols!" cried Cadmus, beside himself with rage.

"Very well; on what day? I'll be there."

"Saturday morning; we'll meet at St. Albans and go over to the Canada side."

"Very well. I'll be there. If you do not show up I'll publicly brand you as a coward," and with that Harry stalked out of the place.

Half an hour later he reached home and went to his room. He slept but little, and when he arose he ate but little."

Hastening to the shops he went to Tom Wilson and told him of the meeting with Cadmus the night before, saying:

"I want you to go with me to St. Albans to-night."

"Then I'll go. I'll stand by you to the last," Tom replied.

At noon Harry drew money from the office to answer his needs and went home. He put on his best suit, went out and bought a revolver and then returned to the headquarters of Old Put Fire Company.

There he told Sam Collins that if a call came that night or the next day Joe Green would act as foreman and Ed Kearney as nozzleman, adding:

"Tom and I will be gone a couple of days."

"All right," returned Sam. "We'll do our best while you are gone."

That evening Harry and Tom took the train for St. Albans.

There they waited for the arrival of Cadmus and his friend.

But they did not come.

Harry went to the telegraph office and sent a telegram to him.

"I am waiting for you here.

HARRY."

No answer came for four hours and then a policeman came, saying:

"If you are Harry Thorne, I am instructed to say to you that Mr. Cadmus has been arrested in Brandon and cannot come."

"That settles it. Come, Tom, we'll go back," and they did so on the next train.

On arriving at the station a policeman arrested Harry and took him to the station-house, where the chief of police said he'd have to give bond to keep the peace, adding:

"Cadmus is under bond."

"Does that mean that I am not to defend myself if attacked?"

"Oh, no, of course not."

"Well, I don't know that I can give any bond. I own nothing but my hands."

"You have friends enough, I guess."

"Well, I shall ask no friend to give bond for me."

Tom went for a friend, however, and an hour later Harry was free.

The whole town had been in a state of excitement all day long over the rumors of the contemplated duel. Cadmus' friends told him he was crazy to think about fighting a duel with a penniless mechanic, and some of them went off and had him arrested and placed under bond to keep the peace.

"He could have been in St. Albans this morning had he wished," said Harry. "But I think a little reflection told him discretion was the better part of valor. It was his suggestion that we meet there—not mine," and he smiled.

The next day the men in the shop gave him an ovation as he went to his bench. He had got the best of a rich rival, and had backed him down squarely. He bowed to the machinists and said:

"They can't fool with us greasy machinists, eh?" he said. "They're afraid they'll get soiled," and he went to work as thought nothing unusual had happened.

CHAPTER XV.

HARRY RECEIVES A BUSINESS OFFER.

When all the particulars of the quarrel between Cadmus and Harry Thorne became known to the public, the aristocratic young man was guyed mercilessly by the press. Life was getting to be a burden to him, and when Miss Maitland laughed at him he became desperate. He was madly in love with her, and she knew it.

"I don't believe in duels," she said to him; "nor in men who are afraid to fight duels."

"But I am not afraid to fight a duel," he protested.

"I did not say you were," and she elevated her eyebrows, stared at him and then smiled. "Women in all ages have admired bold, brave, manly men—men who risk their lives for others, or a principle. Young Thorne has all those qualities, and poor as he is, some very rich young men would do well to pattern after him."

"Oh, you're always making a hero of that fellow."

"Do you know any young lady who does not admire him?" she asked.

He did not answer, and she added:

"I admire him more than any other young man I ever knew."

That broke him all up.

He left her presence, and that evening tried to drown his grief in champagne.

A few days after that he left Brandon and was gone two days. No one knew where he had gone. He returned, but did not say where he had been.

Soon after that Harry received a letter from a Pittsburgh mill owner or manager, making him an offer of a liberal salary to go there and take charge of a department in the shops.

Harry was very much astonished, as he had never heard of the man or the mill. He showed the letter to the manager of McCreary's mills.

"It's a good mill, Harry," he said, "and that's a good offer. I would advise you to see Mr. McCreary before you accept it. You have made a good name here, and have many warm friends. You would be lost in Pittsburgh and never have the show there that you have here."

Harry took the letter home with him and showed it to his father and mother.

The old man was at once in favor of accepting the offer.

"It's more than double what you and me both earn here," he said; "I can't earn wages much longer, and in a couple of years you can save enough to start a shop of your own."

"I should hate to leave Brandon," Harry said, shaking his head.

"Yes, I know. You have friends here, and have a good time among the boys, but money is what you must have to get on in the world."

"Yes, yes, sister ought to be out of that mill and stay at home," and he went to bed early to think over the matter.

He had not made up his mind when he went back to the shop the next day. But he kept on thinking—thinking hard. He did not want to leave the Old Put boys, and somehow the face of Edith Maitland, the rich, aristocratic daughter of Judge Maitland, kept coming before him.

"I wish I could see her," he thought to himself, "and tell her about it. I'd do just what she'd say do."

Of course he would.

So would any young man in the city. She was one they were all eager to obey.

That evening when he went home his sister said to him:

"Brother, Miss Maitland has sent me an invitation to be one of several girls to assist in the church fair where she is one of the managers. I think I ought to go."

"Of course; go by all means."

"She wants me to go to a meeting of the managers tonight. Will you see me there and back?"

"Yes."

So he went with her to the church where the managers were to meet in the pastor's study. Miss Maitland met them, took charge of Etta and said to Harry:

"Wait here, please," and she led Etta in and introduced her to the others. Then she went into the other room where Harry was, saying:

"I haven't seen you since you went up to St. Albans. Were you going to kill him?"

"I was going to meet him. I don't know what I should have done."

"I am glad you didn't meet him. I should have been very unhappy if either of you had been hurt. Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"Why, ladies don't generally like to get mixed up in such things."

"No, but I—I—am your friend, and like to have you tell me of such things."

"Well, I want your advice about another matter," and he told her about the Pittsburgh letter.

She turned pale as she listened.

"You must not accept it. You must not leave Brandon under any circumstances," she said to him.

"But it's twice as much as I can earn here," he replied.

"That may be, but in the end you'll make your fortune here. You have friends here who will stand by you to the last. Promise you won't leave Brandon, Harry."

"I promise," he said, in a low tone of voice. "I'd promise you anything."

"Would you?"

"Yes."

"Then promise me you will come to the fair every evening."

"Certainly I will."

"I want you to come because I like you and your sister. I—I—but you'll come, won't you?"

"Yes—yes, and shall be glad to be near you and look at

you," and the look he gave her sent the blood to her face and a light into her eyes that told of joy in her heart.

"Then come and bring Etta every evening, and I'll let you look at me all the time—and I'll look at you, too," and she gave him a smile that thrilled him through and through.

Suddenly Harry asked bluntly:

"Are you engaged?"

"Engaged—how?" she asked in surprise.

"To be married? I heard you were."

"To whom?"

"Cadmus."

A look of scorn came over her face.

"No. You didn't believe it, did you?"

"I didn't know what to believe."

"You don't believe it now?"

"No; I believe you in all things."

"Would you care if I were?"

"Were what?"

"Engaged to—anyone?"

He turned pale, looked her full in the face, and said:

"Yes; it would make me a murderer. I'd kill him."

Crack!

A pistol shot came through the window back of them. Harry started, lurched forward and fell to the floor on his face. A shriek rang out from her lips and then she sank in a swoon by his side.

CHAPTER XVI.

HARD SCRAPED BY A BULLET.

The wild scream of Edith Maitland as she swooned and sank down by Harry Thorne on the floor of the little ante-room of the pastor's study brought the others to the scene in terrified haste.

They all heard the shot, too, and knew that someone was hurt. But when they found both unconscious on the floor some of the women became panic-stricken.

Etta Thorne ran to her brother's side, and saw a pool of blood on the floor where his head lay. She, too, gave a piercing shriek and fell in a swoon, adding to the intense excitement already prevailing.

The pastor of the church was a coolheaded man at all times. He at once called to his wife to look after the two girls, while he and several young men present took charge of Harry.

They lifted him up from the floor and laid him on a lounge, blood streaming from a ghastly wound on his head.

"Run for Dr. Miller!" he said to one of the young men.

Dr. Miller lived one short block from the church, and he happened to be at home when the summons came. He hastened to the church.

An examination of Harry's wound was made at once.

"It was a narrow escape," the doctor said.

"He is alive then?" the dominie asked.

"Yes. The bullet glanced without breaking the skull."

"Thank God it's no worse!"

"Yes. It is simply a flesh wound. He'll recover consciousness in a few minutes."

The minister hastened to his wife to tell her the news. The two girls had not yet been restored to consciousness. The doctor sent word to the ladies what to do.

But a full half hour was required to bring them out of their faint.

Etta Thorne was the first one to speak. She moaned and said:

"Oh, is he dead? They have killed him!" and her moans were painful to hear.

"Indeed, no!" exclaimed the minister's wife. "He is alive, with only the skin cut on his head."

Etta sprang to her feet, crying out:

"Oh, let me see him! Let me hear him speak and know that he lives!" and she broke away from those about her, and flew into the other room where Harry lay.

Miss Maitland came to a little later. But she only moaned like one whose heart had been utterly broken by some great calamity. At times she would shudder and moan again.

"Miss Maitland," said the minister's wife, "he is not dead. Only a flesh wound on the head. Tell us how it happened."

She sprang up, gazed at those about her in a bewildered sort of way, and said:

"Somebody shot him through the window. I saw him fall forward on his face. Oh, it's terrible!" and she shuddered again as though an ague had gripped her.

She raised her hand to her head, and on her sleeve was a great splash of blood. An expression of horror burst from a dozen feminine lips.

She gazed at it in silence for a whole minute, and then asked:

"Is it his blood?"

"Why, you were not hurt, were you?" the minister's wife exclaimed.

"I—I—don't know," she stammered, and seemed on the point of fainting again.

"Why, don't you know?" a half-dozen exclaimed at once.

"No," she replied, in a dazed sort of way. "Is he much hurt? Will—he—die?" and there was a look of agony and suspense in her eyes that told the secret of her heart to more than one among the friends about her.

"He is not much hurt, dear," said one of them, "and he has been asking what became of you."

A light came into her eyes and a smile spread over her face. She arose and went into the room where Harry was in the hands of Dr. Miller. She glided by the minister, took Harry's hand in hers, and looked into his face. He looked up and their eyes met.

"They haven't quite killed me yet," he said to her.

"No, but it's no fault of theirs. Oh, how cowardly it was!"

"Yes, but that's the way cowards do. I didn't know I had an enemy mean enough to do such a thing."

Just at that moment two officers came in. The news had gone to police headquarters that Harry Thorne had been shot in the church, and they had come quickly to see about it.

"Who knows anything about it?" one of them asked.

Everyone looked at Edith Maitland, who still held Harry's hand.

"Mr. Thorne and myself were sitting there talking," she said, pointing to the sofa where Harry was sitting when shot, "when a bullet fired outside crashed through that window there. He fell forward on his face."

The officers asked no more questions then, but hastened to examine the window and the ground outside.

People kept coming until several hundred were in and about the church. Miss Maitland insisted that Harry, the doctor, and Etta Thorne should be sent to the Thorne residence in her carriage.

"The carriage will come back for me," she said to Etta. "To-morrow, dear, I'll come and see you. I am so glad it is no worse," and she threw her arms round the young mill girl and kissed her.

On arriving at home Harry was placed in bed by order of the doctor and told to stay there until he gave him permission to get out.

The cowardly attempt on the young fireman's life aroused a

feeling of intense indignation throughout the city. Harry declared he knew not whom to suspect. He did not dream that anyone in all the wide world wanted to kill him.

The mayor offered a large reward for the arrest and conviction of the would-be assassin, and all the detectives in the city went to work for it.

Theodore Cadmus was suspected by many, and the boys of Old Put were outspoken in their opinion of him.

Said Tom Wilson:

"None of us believe that he fired that shot himself. He has money to burn, and money can give employment to very bad people. If we can get hold of the villain, he won't have much time to say his prayers."

"What does such chaps want to pray for anyhow?" Sam Collins asked.

The day after the shooting Judge Maitland called to see Harry. Edith was unable to come—was quite prostrated by the shock to her nervous system.

"But she sent me to see how you were getting on, my boy," the judge said in his jolly way.

"Oh, I am doing very well, considering the hard scrape that bullet gave me," Harry replied. "I am sorry the shock has made her ill."

"Just a bit nervous, that's all. Women can't stand that sort of thing like the men, you know. But look here, Harry, it seems to me that you are getting more than your share of hard knocks as fireman."

"Well, I am willing to share 'em with anybody who wants 'em," Harry replied, "or even give him all."

"Generous boy," remarked the judge. "But why don't you call a halt and stop it?"

"How can I?"

"Get out of the fire company."

"What! and leave the boys to do what I'm afraid to do?"

"But you seem to get all the hurts and the others all the fun," suggested the judge.

"I'm having a little fun myself," Harry replied.

"Where does the laugh come in?"

"At the end. I haven't reached it yet."

"You came very near it last night."

"All the same I didn't get there!"

"No, but it was no fault of some other fellow that you did not," and then the judge questioned him closely as to any suspicions he might have as to the identity of the would-be assassin.

"I know that a good many firemen are down on all Old Put's boys, but I can't believe that any fireman would do such a cowardly thing as that!"

"Yet it was done by somebody, and one who is your enemy."

"Yes—true. Maybe I'll find out some day who he is."

CHAPTER XVII.

STABBED IN THE FLAMES.

While Harry was recovering from the bullet wound on the head the entire detective force was at work trying to get some clew to the identity of the would-be assassin. But no one had seen him about the church that evening, hence no clew could be had on which to base any theory of guilt.

The fair was held in the church two weeks later, and Harry was able to attend it. Etta was one of the most active girls in charge of booths, and divided the honors with Edith Maitland for beauty. But the rich belle was not jealous. On the contrary, she was Etta Thorne's stanchest friend under all circumstances.

Of course, Harry was the lion of the evening, and he was on hand every evening during the week. He could not keep away from Edith Maitland. He did not try to. Yet he never dared to call on her at her home.

One evening he was standing in front of her booth, talking to a gentleman, when the great fire bell rang out an alarm.

"Catch him!" cried Edith. "Do't let him go!"

The gentleman with whom Harry had been talking grabbed him by the collar, saying:

"You must not go, Harry! You are not strong enough!"

Harry did not utter a word, but wriggled out of his coat, left it in his hand, and sprang toward a window.

It was closed.

He smashed the glass and went through like a rocket, and disappeared from sight of those in the church.

The pastor of the church ran to see what had broken the window, for the crash of glass almost caused a panic.

"It was Harry Thorne going to a fire, sir," said a young man.

"Why did he not go through a door?" the minister asked.

"Too much of a hurry, I guess," replied another youth.

"Well, he'll have to pay for that window. There are doors enough for people to go out of without any of that sort of business."

Edith Maitland heard him.

"There were at least fifty women and children between him and the door," she explained, "and he sprang through the window to avoid hurting anyone. Have the window fixed tomorrow and send the bill to me."

"I am sure that is excuse enough, Miss Maitland," replied the dominie. "I shall not send any bill in."

"I am sure that I want to pay it, and you must let me do so."

"Indeed, no."

"I think I was the cause of it," remarked a gentleman, "for I tried to detain him. That was his only way of escape."

"But I called to you to catch him," said Edith. "I was the cause of it."

"Well, we'll all divide it between us," said the dominie, smiling, as a peacemaker.

It was a great fire that night in Brandon. Many houses were destroyed, for a wind sprang up which carried the flames along an entire block of old frame buildings.

The four fire companies were out, and the firemen worked like heroes. A dozen lives were saved by them. Harry saved a little girl and an old man. Theodore Cadmus saved two lives and had his mustache burned off. Other firemen saved life also, and all four companies seemed to work in harmony in the face of an appalling danger.

In one of the burning houses a woman's screams were heard. Harry went in at one window, Theodore Cadmus at another.

Every room was full of smoke, and the stairway was a mass of fierce flames.

The screams of the woman were still heard, but whence they came Harry could not determine.

"Here's help! Come here!" he called to her at the top of his voice.

A few moments later he was furiously attacked by a man. Half blinded by the smoke, he yet could see that his assailant was a fireman—a member of Brandon No. 2.

"Hold up!" he cried. "I'm a fireman myself!"

But the other drew a knife and cut him on the shoulder, and then on the arm. In defending himself Harry was forced back toward the burning staircase till he stood on the brink of the fierce furnace. With a hoarse laugh, demoniacal in its ring, his assailant sprang at him and pushed him over into the seething mass of red flames.

Down, down he went into a bed of coals and crashed through it! He landed in the cellar.

The fire had not reached there save such as went down with him. The flooring was nearly burned through when he struck it. He sprang to his feet, rubbed the smoke out of his eyes, and then saw the light that came through the iron grating in the rear of the house.

To run to it, unfasten the grating and climb out was the work of but a few moments.

"That was a hot passage," he said to himself, as he looked up at the doomed building. "But who was that fellow, and why did he attack me? He cut me in two places. Can it be that he went crazy? He was a fireman. I must go round there and let 'em know I am safe and then go to a drug store or home."

He climbed over a back fence, and made his way to the street by way of the next house. As he appeared a cry of:

"There he is! Harry is safe!" and cheers went up from a thousand throats. The crowd had been in an awful suspense about him.

"But you are bleeding!" cried an officer, as he ran up to him.

"Yes, I am hurt!" he replied. "But there's another fireman in there."

"No; he came out down the ladder a couple of minutes ago. He said he thought it was all up with you."

"Who was he?"

"Cadmus, of Brandon No. 2."

"Ah! Was it Cadmus?"

"Yes. How did you get out?"

"By way of the cellar—dived down through the burning floor. I am losing a good deal of blood. Call an ambulance."

In the midst of a great conflagration the firemen could not lose any time attending to a wounded comrade. The police had to attend to that.

The ambulance came, and Harry was sent to the hospital to have his wounds dressed. Two other members of Columbia fire company had been taken there, and he made the third one.

The surgeon examined his hurts and said:

"Why, you have been cut—not burned!"

"Yes, but I have two burns, too," Harry replied.

"How did you get cut?"

"I was attacked in the burning building. But don't ask me any more questions, as I don't wish to say anything about it just now, doctor."

"Very well. I'll do what I can for you," and the surgeon went to work and dressed his hurts as quickly as possible.

"Can I go home, doctor?" Harry asked, as soon as the doctor had finished with him.

"No. I think you had better remain where you are for the present. That cut in the shoulder may be more serious than it looks just now."

The news went through the crowd that Harry Thorne was seriously hurt, and had been sent to the hospital. It did not take long for it to get to the church where the fair was being held.

Edith Maitland heard it, and turned pale as death. She went to Etta and said:

"Harry is hurt again. Come, we will go and see him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARRIED IN THE HOSPITAL.

Harry Thorne was lying on a cot in the hospital thinking over the many hurts he had received at fires, and this last one in particular, when an attendant came in and said there were two ladies who had called to see him.

"Let them come in if it is not against the rules," he replied.

She went out and returned a few moments later, accompanied by his sister Etta and Miss Maitland.

"Oh, brother," cried Etta, "you are hurt again!" and she ran to him and kissed him.

"Yes, but not very badly," he said. "It was kind of you to come at this time of night, Miss Maitland. Take seats, please. It's worth being hurt to have such honor shown me."

"I could not help coming, Harry," Miss Maitland replied. "I saw that Etta was anxious to come and so I brought her. Are you badly burned?"

"No, my hurts are not burns this time. I lost a good deal of blood, and had to come here to have it stopped. Tell mother not to be uneasy, as I'll be sent home in a day or two."

"Oh, I can't go home and leave you here, brother," cried Etta, when she heard him.

"But mother will hear I am hurt and will come here all the way on foot," he said. "Go and tell her, and she'll not worry so much about it."

"You are right, Harry," said Miss Maitland. "Think of your mother first all the time. I'll take her home at once. Do you wish anything? Let me do something for you?"

"Why, you are doing a good deal now," he replied, "and I am grateful to you for it."

She laid a hand over his mouth, saying:

"I won't let you talk that way, Harry. The gratitude is all on my part. I owe you my life."

Harry raised the hand to his unwounded arm, caught hers, and pressing it to his lips, kissed it a dozen times. She blushed rosy red, but did not draw her hand away.

"For all that I am grateful to you for your kindness to my sweet sister," he finally said, in a low tone of voice.

"I love her for her own sweet self," Edith replied. "I shall come and see you to-morrow and bring your mother."

"Thank you. I want to tell you something and have you advise me what to do when you come," he returned.

The two girls left him, and were driven to Harry's house in the Maitland carriage. Mrs. Thorne was still up, and had not heard the news. They told her, and she wanted to go to him at once.

"No—not now," said Edith. "He is doing well, and I told him I would bring you to him to-morrow."

She then submitted to the two girls, and Edith returned to her home.

It was not known to anyone that Harry had been cut, save the two surgeons at the hospital, hence the morning papers simply stated that he had been hurt, and sent to the hospital.

The next day Miss Maitland took Mrs. Thorne to the hospital in her carriage. The meeting of mother and son brought tears to her eyes, and she turned away to avoid intruding. But Harry called to her, and she came to his bedside.

Mrs. Thorne went to the other end of the room to ask the doctor some questions about the nature of Harry's hurts, thus leaving Edith alone with him.

"I want to tell you a secret," Harry said to her as he held her hand, "and then want your advice. I was stabbed twice in that burning house last night."

"Oh, my God, Harry!" she gasped.

"Yes, and by Theodore Cadmus. He tried to kill me!"

She dropped into a chair and looked at him with horror in every line of her face.

"What shall I do about it?" he asked. "There were no witnesses. He would deny it, of course, and it would be simply his word and mine. To kill him would ruin me, yet it seems he is determined to put me out of the way."

"Oh, Harry," she said, "I—I don't know what to say! It's just too horrible for anything," and she seemed like one half-dazed by the awful news. "Let me think a little while. Theodore is awfully jealous of you. He thinks I like you more than

I do him, but I didn't think he'd do such a thing as that. Oh, it's perfectly awful! You saved my life, and now I am the cause of your own life being in peril. Harry, do you love me?"

The suddenness of the question seemed to startle her as much as it did Harry. She looked eagerly into his eyes as she waited for his reply. It came quickly:

"Yes, more than my own soul—more than life itself. I would die for you!"

Ere he finished a bright gleam came into her eyes, and her face, white as a sheet the moment before, became rosy with blushes.

"Would you marry me?" she asked.

"Yes—yes!" and he half rose on his elbow in his eagerness. "Then ask me to be your wife."

"Edith Maitland, I love you. Will you be my wife?" he said in low, tremulous tones.

"Yes, Harry," she replied, "and when I am your wife he will come to the conclusion that I am lost to him forever. Then he will no longer seek to kill you. We must marry at once. Ah, here comes your mother! Tell her about it."

Mrs. Thorne came back with the doctor, saying:

"Harry, the doctor says you can't be removed to-day, and has granted permission for me to stay here with you as long as I wish."

"Thank you, doctor," said Harry. "There is no nurse like a mother."

"Yes; that's why I granted the permission," said the doctor, smiling.

He then went away, and Harry said to his mother:

"Mother, I'm engaged to be married."

"What!" she gasped, almost falling out of her chair.

"I am going to marry Miss Edith!"

"What!"

And she seemed on the verge of a collapse.

"Will you let me have him?" Edith asked her.

"My Lord—yes."

Edith threw her arms round her neck and kissed her, saying:

"I couldn't help loving him!"

And then they both told the astonished mother the story of the stabbing in the burning house—of their love and resolve to marry at once.

"But he isn't but eighteen," said Mrs. Thorne.

"Well, I'm only a little older," replied Edith. "We are both old enough to love each other, and we will be growing older every day."

So it was settled that a minister should be sent for at once, and the knot tied ere anyone could interfere to prevent it.

"I'll go for the minister myself," said Edith, "to make sure that he comes."

She re-entered her carriage and was driven to the residence of her pastor, to whom she said:

"Doctor, Harry Thorne is hurt and needs your services at the hospital at once. Come with me."

"Dear me! Is the brave young man so badly hurt?" exclaimed the reverend doctor.

"Yes; but I think your visit will do him a great deal of good."

Of course, the doctor went with her, and on the way she told him what he was to do.

"Oh, you rogue!" he exclaimed, "I suspected it would come to this some day, but not so soon."

She laughed and said:

"I want to get control of him so as to save him from running to fires."

"And save him for yourself, eh?"

"Yes, of course."

"Very well, I wish you joy."

The doctor reached the hospital and found that Etta Thorne had come from the mill to see Harry.

The two girls flew to each other's arms.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're to be my sister!" cried Etta.

"Yes, and we'll love each other as sisters, too," replied Edith.

"Join hands," said the minister.

Edith stood by the bedside and held Harry's hand in hers. In five minutes they were pronounced man and wife.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The great fire-bell rang out its call to the firemen of Brandon, and Harry sprang up involuntarily as if to don his helmet and seize his trumpet. Edith pushed him back, saying:

"No, Harry. I am in command now," and she gave him her first kiss.

CHAPTER XIX.

HARRY THORNE IS TAKEN CARE OF BY WIFE AND MOTHER.

As soon as the ceremony was over the minister left the hospital to return to his home. Just as he was about to enter the Maitland carriage to be driven away, he met Judge Maitland himself, who was coming to see Harry.

"Ah, doctor!" greeted the judge, extending his hand to the minister. "What's up? Did Edith send for you? Is Harry badly hurt?"

"Yes, she sent for me—came for me, in fact. You know how she is. Everybody has to do as she says."

"Yes, yes. She rules me, rules her mother, and yet is just the best girl in the world."

"Yes, and now she rules her husband."

"Eh? What's that?"

"I have just married her to Harry Thorne," said the dominie.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" gasped the astonished judge, leaning against the hospital gate and glaring at the dominie.

"He is a fine fellow, judge," the dominie said, "and you'll never be ashamed of him as a son-in-law."

"I know that well enough, but he is so young—a mere boy yet."

"What a pity it is we have not more boys like him. Take my advice, judge, and give them your blessing."

"Oh, yes, I've got to do that," the judge replied. "I can't help myself. That girl is in full command all the time. Well, well! I didn't expect this," and he blew a hard blast in his handkerchief and turned and entered the hospital.

He was shown up to the room where Harry was. Edith sprang up and ran to meet him, saying:

"I am glad you have come, father. Harry is hurt again. I have just married him in order to take care of him and keep him from killing himself."

"So I have a son at last, eh?" the judge remarked, as he moved toward the bed with her.

"Yes, and one of the best and bravest that ever lived," she replied.

"Of course you think so. Here, you young rogue! Did you save my daughter's life just to take her from me in the end?"

"Not for that purpose, judge," Harry replied. "She'll be the same good daughter she always was. I could not help myself. She had my heart and wouldn't give it up, so I had to take her."

"Well, you've got a job on your hands that will beat all the fires in the world. She's a holy terror. I give you my

blessing because you'll need all the blessing you can get," and he shook Harry's hand as he spoke.

"I guess I can stand her," Harry replied. "I need somebody to boss me, anyhow."

Mrs. Thorne turned to the judge and said:

"Judge, I had nothing to do with it. They did it themselves. I told them they were both too young to marry."

"Yes, I know just how it was, madam. Young people are away ahead of their parents nowadays."

"Old folks are too slow," said Edith, at which all four laughed.

"Well, go ahead. Be as happy as you can. Whatever you want let me know and you shall have it. Happiness is everything."

"You are just the best father that ever lived, and I'm a chip of the old block," Edith remarked, as she threw her arms about her father's neck and kissed him. "Tell mother about it. I am going to stay here and see if I can get him home where I can nurse him."

The judge went away, and Edith resumed her seat by the bedside of her young fireman husband.

"Etta, dear," she said, "don't go to the mill any more. When Harry is well enough to travel we'll go on a trip, and you must go with us. You are my sister now, and I love you as a sister, for Harry's sake and for your own."

It was a happy party in the hospital that day, and it was near noon ere Mrs. Thorne left to go home to prepare dinner for her husband.

The old man came home and said to his wife:

"I hear Harry has been badly hurt. Have you seen him yet?"

"Yes, I went to the hospital and stayed two hours with him. His wife is going to have him brought home this—"

"His wife! What do you mean?"

"Why, he's married."

"Eh? What? Our Harry married?"

"Yes. He married Edith Maitland this morning at the hospital."

The old man nearly fell off his chair in his amazement at the news.

"Well, well!" he gasped.

"Yes, it is well," said the old lady. "She told Etta not to go to the mill any more, as she wanted her to travel with them when Harry was ready to go. Oh, but she does love Harry and Etta!"

"Yes. She is a grand girl," the old man assented. "She has a brave heart to marry a poor boy like our Harry."

Neither of them knew of the other cause of the hasty marriage aside from their love for each other. They were to learn of that later.

In the meantime Edith did not let any grass grow under her feet. She sent for her father's family physician to come to the hospital at once and take charge of the removal of Harry to his home. The old physician came. She told him of her marriage. He expressed his astonishment, saying:

"You two have been reared in two different spheres. I hope you may never repent the step."

"I am sure I shall not, doctor," she replied. "I love him, and that is all that is necessary to say."

"Does your father know?" the old family physician asked her.

"Yes. He has been here and given us his blessing."

The doctor was a born aristocrat and did not approve of such romantic marriages. But he knew Edith too well not to do as she requested. She was rich in her own right as well as being the only child of very wealthy parents.

While the doctor was arranging for the removal of Harry to his home Edith went out and entered her carriage.

"Drive to No. — Grove street," she said to her coachman. That was the residence of the Cadmus family.

The carriage soon stopped in front of the aristocratic mansion.

"Is Theodore here?" she asked of the servant who admitted her.

"No; he is down at the office; I think."

She was going to leave when Mrs. Cadmus came in.

"My dear Edith! I am so glad to see you!" greeted Theodore's mother.

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Cadmus. I called to see Theodore. I have an important matter for him to attend to. Do you think I shall find him at the office?"

"I am sure of it. He seemed quite used up this morning. He said he would attend to some business at the office and then come home to rest and sleep. He overexerted himself at that awful fire last night. Really, I wish he would leave that fire company, but his friends won't let him."

"Yes, I think so, too. It is a very dangerous life, the life of a fireman."

"Indeed it is."

"But if there were no brave firemen many people would perish in the flames."

"True, my dear. You would have been a victim, no doubt."

"I am sure of it. Firemen are absolutely necessary. But really I must go, as I am in a very great hurry. If I should not find Theodore at the office, tell him to meet me at the fair this evening," and with that she took leave of the mother of Theodore and went out to her carriage again.

Just as she was about to enter it she espied Theodore returning home. She waited for him and said:

"I've come after you—something to tell you. Please get in and go with me."

CHAPTER XX.

THE YOUNG BRIDE'S PERIL.

Theodore Cadmus was only too happy in the presence of Edith. He lost no time in entering her carriage with her, saying:

"Truly, this is an unexpected pleasure. You have been cruel to me of late."

"You have been haughty and disobedient," she said, "and it was necessary to punish you."

"Well, my punishment has been hard to bear. My disobedience, as you are pleased to call it, came from the head and not the heart."

"But you should not let your heart run away with your head. That is a woman's weakness. Men should be stronger."

"Yes, but when a strong man loves, his love is the strongest part of his nature."

"Perhaps—if he is a good man. Good men are not very plentiful nowadays."

"No man is ever as good as a good woman," he replied.

"But he should try to be."

"Yes, but why seek the unattainable? Men are made good by good women. That's why they are called helpmates."

"But no man should stoop so low as to ask a good woman to run a private reformatory for his benefit. He should make himself a refuge for weak, timid woman, instead of making a reformatory of her."

"Edith, you are severe to-day," he remarked, on finding himself beaten in the discussion.

"I have good cause to be, Theodore. You have told me repeatedly that you loved me, and have asked me to be your

wife. I have declined because of the lack in you of the qualities I admire in a man."

"Your ideal is too high. There is no such thing as a perfect man, Edith."

"I am well aware of that," she replied. "I have never expected to meet one. But will you honestly answer a question I want to ask you?"

"Yes, Edith—on my word as a man."

"Will you do so honestly and truly, Theodore?"

"Yes, Edith."

"Tell me, then, why you stabbed Harry Thorne last night—why you tried to kill him?"

He caught his breath like one who had been deluged with ice water in midsummer, and turned ashen hued and speechless. She looked him full in the eyes and waited for his answer. It was pitiful, the expression of his face being one of mingled horror and fear.

"You do not answer me," she remarked, still holding him with her eyes riveted on his.

"Edith!" he gasped. "Do you accuse me of—"

"No, no! Not that! You promised to answer on your honor as a man!" she cried, interrupting him. "Don't utter a single word till you have done so!" and she laid a hand on his shoulder as she spoke and continued to look him fearlessly in the eyes.

He seemed on the verge of a collapse. His face was livid, then ashen, and there was a hunted look in his eyes.

But she never flinched in pressing the question.

"I know all," she said. "You must tell me why you did it."

"For love of you," he said, in a hoarse tone not untinged with a fierce desperation.

"You did it for love of me?"

"Yes. He stood between us. One or the other of us had to die. If I cannot have you, no other man shall. I would kill a dozen men to call you my own, Edith Maitland."

"The boy had never harmed you."

"Through you he has made my life a living torture. You sang his praise till I writhed in agony and people said you were infatuated with him. My love can end only in death. But who told you this?"

"He told me in the hospital this morning. He will not prosecute you because I will not let him. Think of such a case in court and my name being mixed up in it! You must let him alone henceforth, for any further attempts will be useless. He is going to cease being a fireman. He has run to his last fire. He is my husband now. We were married this morning."

He started as if stung. Then a death-like pallor came into his face and he seemed like one suddenly turned to stone. He was rigid as marble and his eyes were riveted on hers in a stony stare.

"Then there is nothing for me to do but die," he said, in a hollow tone of voice.

"No, you will not die, Theodore. You will get over it and finally be glad that things came about as they have."

"No, I shall die and you shall die with me. I could not have you in life, but we shall not be parted in death," and he drew from his bosom a dagger as he spoke. "I bought this to rid me of a rival. Fate willed otherwise. It will untie us in death."

She was white as a sheet in the face as she saw herself face to face with death. How quickly, how bitterly she regretted having taken him into the carriage, for now she was in his power. A thousand things flashed through her brain in an instant of time.

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He had expected her to shriek and call for help, and before help could come he intended to stab her to the heart, and then bury the dagger in his own breast. But he hesitated, and she snatched at the dagger in his hand. She missed it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a hoarse laugh from his lips. He raised the dagger and made a fierce lunge at her bosom. She twisted quickly aside and it went under her arm into the upholstered back of the seat, and was broken off at the hilt in the hard woodwork.

Quick as a flash she jabbed her fan into his eyes with one hand and with the other opened the door of the carriage and sprang out. The motion of the carriage caused her to fall to the ground.

She screamed, the coachman looked back and was dumfounded at seeing his young mistress lying on the ground. He pulled up quickly, sprang to the ground, only to meet Theodore Cadmus, who had gotten out, though half blinded by the fan.

She sprang to her feet and ran like a deer. Cadmus drew a small pistol from his pocket, placed the muzzle against his right temple and pulled the trigger. It snapped, failed to fire, and the next moment the coachman had knocked him down and disarmed him.

CHAPTER XXI.

CADMUS A MADMAN.

Edith ran, terror lending wings to her feet. Into the nearest house she darted, crying out:

"Save me, save me!"

It created a panic in the household, for no men were there, only a mother, two daughters and the servants.

But one of the servants was a brawny daughter of Erin. She ran out on the stoop and saw that the coachman had made a prisoner of a man, and that the danger was over.

"They've got 'im, mum!" she cried, and the other servants soon saw that the peril no longer existed.

The ladies of the house did not know Edith, but they soothed her as best they could, and told her that she was safe.

"Who is he, and what did he try to do?" the mistress of the house asked her.

"He tried to kill me and then himself," she replied, giving a shudder as she remembered how near he came to making an end of her.

Then she told who she was.

They knew the judge very well by reputation. They remembered her as the young lady whom Harry Thorne had saved at the fire.

By this time a crowd had gathered round the coachman and Cadmus. An officer came and the coachman told what had happened.

"Guess he's off his nut," the officer said, as he took charge of Cadmus. "Come along, sir."

Cadmus did not utter a word. He had a wild stare about him that told of an unbalanced mind, and the officer kept a firm grip on his arm all the way to the station.

The coachman then sent word to Edith in the house that the carriage was at her service and Cadmus in the hands of the police.

She thanked the ladies for the protection they had given her and apologized for the trouble she had given them and went out to the carriage and entered it.

"Drive to father's office at once, Andrew," she said, as she resumed her seat once more.

She was driven rapidly to the office of Judge Maitland and word sent in that she wanted to see him. He happened to be in and quickly came out to her.

She told him in as few words as possible all that had happened. He was staggered at the news.

"I am going back to Harry," she said. "You had better go and see that he is locked up before he kills himself, for he is perfectly crazy."

"Yes, yes, no doubt. I am not sure you are not that way, too, dear."

"Of course I am, but there's method, sense and love in my madness which won't hurt anybody at all. Drive to the hospital, Andrew."

The carriage was driven away. The judge gazed after it till it turned a corner, after which he sighed, drew his hand across his eyes, shook his head and then walked off toward the office of the chief of police. There he told that official what had happened, and suggested that Cadmus be placed in a straight-jacket and have physicians examine him as to his sanity.

"I have had no report of his arrest yet, judge," said the chief.

A few minutes later the report came, and the chief promised to see that the young man was kept locked up until some sort of legal proceedings were instituted.

Edith returned to the hospital in time to see Harry taken out to an ambulance and sent to his home. She and the doctor went with them. When the doctor left, she remained to nurse her husband.

That evening the entire membership of Old Put Fire Company, in full uniform, with old Uncle Daly at their head, marched up to the house to see Harry and his bride.

Edith shook hands with every one, saying:

"I am glad to see you. Harry's friends are my friends. But I am not going to let him run to any more fires. He runs right into it and gets hurt."

"Don't blame you, mum," replied Uncle Billy. "But if he hadn't run into the fire, where would you be?"

"I know—I know," she replied. "He saved me—saved several others. He has done his share, don't you really think so?"

"Yes, I do. But we don't want to give him up."

"Oh, he's married now and will have to stay at home with his wife, like all married men ought to do," and she laughed merrily as though she had not that day stood face to face with grim death.

But they made her promise to let him be a member of the company still, and they then and there elected her an honorary member.

"When Harry gets out again we will all have a grand banquet," she said to the boys as they were about to return to their hall. "After that we are going to travel awhile. We won't forget you, though. How could I forget the Old Put boys?"

They gave her a cheer and then went away.

That evening Judge Maitland and his wife came in their carriage. The mother and daughter met only as a loving mother could meet her child under such circumstances. In a private consultation with him Harry repeated his statement that Cadmus had stabbed him twice in that fire and then shoved him into the debris of the stairway.

"That is enough to hold him," remarked the judge.

"Are they going to prosecute him?" Harry asked.

"Yes, if the experts pronounce him sane," was the reply. Edith had not told Harry of the attempt on her life in the carriage that day.

The papers of the city were full of the details of the extraordinary occurrences the next morning, and the excitement

increased. The feeling against Brandon No. 2 Fire Company became very bitter among the mass of the people save the more wealthy ones.

Cadmus was kept locked up and he sat in his cell with a stony stare that never changed. He refused to utter one word to even his parents. He would answer no questions nor make any remark. He would sit and stare at the wall or at space, noticing nothing that came before him.

His mother became frantic in her grief and denounced Edith in the most bitter terms, saying:

"She has ruined him by her heartless flirtations with him. She encouraged his attentions, and up to the time of that fire let him believe she would marry him."

"But she had the right to change her mind, my dear," suggested her husband, who had not quite lost his head over the situation."

"Change her mind! She has wrecked his mind by her heartless conduct. She has gone down to her proper level in marrying that boy—a common, low mechanic."

"You should not talk so, my dear," cautioned her husband. But the frantic mother knew no caution in the great grief that filled her soul. She cried out in her agony and heaped anthemas upon the devoted head of Edith Maitland, till she suddenly collapsed and fell in a death-like swoon at the feet of her husband and friends.

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD PUT'S BOYS GET A SURPRISE.

Never before, in the history of the town, did Brandon ever have such a sensation as that created by the marriage of Harry Thorne to Edith Maitland, and the attempt of murder and suicide by Theodore Cadmus. The news all went together, and struck the average citizen "all in a heap." Men heard it, repeated it, shook their heads, and said:

"It can't all be true. There's too much of it," and but few would believe the whole of it till they had first taken it in smaller doses.

It was not until the next day, when the papers gave so many particulars, did people quite understand what had happened.

A great deal of sympathy went out to Cadmus.

"Poor fellow!" people said. "He loved and lost. He loved deeply. Lost his girl, and then his head. Pity!"

But in a day or two more they learned that he had stabbed Harry in the burning building, trying to get rid of him as a rival, and then the tide of sympathy surged the other way.

His friends denied it—denouncing it as false.

Thus the two factions talked all over the city. It was finally quieted by Edith's statement that Cadmus confessed to her in the carriage that he tried to kill Thorne "for love of her."

Then everyone was willing to spread the mantle of charity over the poor fellow, by saying:

"He was crazy and didn't know what he was doing."

In the meantime Cadmus was in the hands of physicians, who advised that he be sent to a private asylum for treatment. He remained silent, refusing to speak to anyone—not a word did he utter from the moment of his arrest.

Harry's wounds proved to be quite serious, the dagger having gone deep into his shoulder. But under the care of a skillful physician and the tender nursing of Edith, he recovered rapidly.

As soon as he was able to sit up she had him removed to her own home. Her parents welcomed him as a son, and Edith was the happiest bride Brandon ever saw.

A month later he was himself again. The boys down at the

engine house insisted on a visit from him, and he promised to be present with them on Tuesday night.

The boys determined to give him a reception that would make his head swim. They decorated the hall, the engine, the ladder truck and the whole front of the building.

It was to be a stag party—only the members of Old Put to be present, when they would feast, and sing and recall their hairbreadth escapes. Harry told Edith about it, and she said:

"You can't go unless you give me your word of honor that you will not run to any fire if an alarm should be given."

"I give you my word that I will not go to a fire," he replied.

"Then you may go," and she kissed him.

When Tuesday night came, Harry went down afoot in the full uniform of Old Put fire company.

"Here he is, boys!" cried Sam Collins, who was on the lookout for him.

The boys nearly raised the roof with their yells. They cheered him till he was upstairs in their midst. Then Uncle Billy grasped him by the hand, saying:

"Harry, my boy, we're glad to see you here. We've been lonely without you. You must take command again," and the old man handed him the trumpet as he spoke.

He smiled, shook his head and put his hands behind him, saying:

"Boys, before I came away from home I had to promise my wife that I would not run to any fire if an alarm should be sounded. I am sure you don't want to get me into trouble, so don't ask me to touch that trumpet. Don't place temptation in my way. I want to say to you that I am the happiest boy in the world, and the friend of Old Put and every member in it. My wife is in love with the whole company, and I think she means to boss the whole concern. My advice to you is to let her boss you as much as she pleases. She bosses me, and I don't kick."

He would have said more, but the boys fairly roared and drowned his voice. They whopped and yelled, and when someone struck up "She's a jolly good fellow," they all sang the famous roystering song with ear-splitting energy.

They spent half an hour at that sort of business, and then prepared to go into another room, where a bountiful supply of sandwiches and cake were waiting for them. Just as they started in they were surprised at hearing a rush on the stairs.

A moment or two later the door opened, and in rushed Edith Thorne, followed by about thirty young ladies, friends of hers, who had come in carriages, with huge hampers filled with good things, followed by a band of music.

Harry was as much surprised as any of the others.

"Here we are, boys!" Edith said, "and if you are not glad to have us here, get out, and we'll run the meeting ourselves—won't we, girls?"

"Yes!" came in a feminine chorus from the young ladies.

"Say, boys," cried Harry, "didn't I tell you she was boss?"

There was a roar from the boys, and the girls fairly screamed with laughter.

Tom Wilson sprang up and called out:

"Boys, let's give the ladies a royal welcome! Hip—hip—hurrah!"

They nearly raised the roof.

Some of the girls placed fingers in their ears to dull the tremendous noise they made.

"Oh, you thought you were going to have a racket all by yourselves, did you, Uncle Billy?" said Edith to the old ex-fireman. "You are old enough to know that there's no fun in life where the girls are left out."

"Indeed, yes," the old man replied. "The Bible says it's not good for man to be alone."

"And the Bible is right," returned Edith. "Now, girls, we'll hold a reception, so these bashful youths can be introduced to

us. They never saw so many pretty girls together before in all their lives, nor did they ever get such a surprise as we have given them."

The reception was held.

Then came the supper, and after that the dance. It was way on beyond midnight when it broke up, and all had enjoyed the surprise party beyond measure.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HARRY IS SENT FOR BY HIS OLD EMPLOYER.

The day after the reception at the Old Put hall found Harry and Edith talking over their proposed trip round the world. She wanted to take the trip to give Harry a chance to see some of the world, saying she felt so happy that nothing but a bridal tour round the world would satisfy her.

"I am sure I am happy enough without any trip," Harry said.

"That's just like a man!" she replied, laughing.

A servant came in with a note addressed to Harry.

Edith snatched it up, opened and read it ere he could even see to whom it was addressed. She then handed it over to him, saying:

"It's from Mr. McCreary, dear."

So it was—and ran as follows:

"Dear Harry.—If your wife will trust you out of her sight for an hour or two come down to the office on receipt of this. I wish to see you on important business.

"Very truly yours, James McCreary."

Harry looked up at her and laughed.

"I believe he is making fun of me," she remarked.

"Not a bit of it," Harry replied. "I haven't been down to the office since our marriage, and it's a little slap at me for it. I'll go down and see what he wants."

"Don't stay long," she said, and he put on his hat and went out.

Down at the mill office the old man and all the hands in the place gave him a welcome.

"I began to think you had forgotten us, Harry," the mill owner said. "I couldn't wait any longer, so I had to send for you. Come into my private office here. I want to have a talk with you," and he led the way into the office and closed the door.

Harry sat down in front of him and waited for him to begin.

"That improvement you made in that machine some time ago has been a great success. Orders are coming in for it by every mail. I have a faint idea of an improvement in locomotive building, which, when developed, would make a complete revolution in that line, as well as make a fortune for the inventor. I want you to see if you can give me some shape to the idea," and the old mill owner drew from his desk a lot of drawings, and spread them out on a table. Harry was at once interested. He saw that the rich manufacturer was treating him as a business equal.

McCreary pointed out all the intricate points of the machinery, and showed him where he hoped an improvement could be made that would dispense with a great deal of machinery now used.

"I see what you are aiming at," said Harry. "It would indeed make a revolution in locomotive building. Let me have these drawings a few days and study them. I don't know what I can do, but I will try to meet your expectations."

"Why, certainly, take 'em along. I had 'em made for that purpose."

Harry rolled them up carefully, inserted them in a tube, took leave of the old gentleman, and returned home with them.

He showed them to Edith and told her what McCreary wanted.

"But I don't want you to be a machinist," she said. "You are my husband, and my fortune is ample for us. Why should you work as a machinist?"

"It would not be that sort of work," he explained. "It would be an invention that would bring me both fame and fortune. It would show to the world that you did not make a mistake in marrying a poor boy, and that I could have made a fortune even if I had not married one."

That silenced her, and from that moment she took a deep interest in the work, saying she would postpone the trip round the world until the invention was finished.

In the meantime Etta Thorne was developing a beauty that became the talk of the town. Edith took charge of her, and that opened the doors of society to her. She soon had a very wealthy young man at her feet, and Edith advised her to marry him—if she could love him.

"Marry the man you love," she said to her. "Then you'll be happy. Happiness is everything."

A month passed, and Harry was still at work on the drawings Mr. McCreary had given him.

One day Edith was reading, when Harry came to her, put his arm about her neck, kissed her, and said:

"I've got it at last, Edith."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" and she sprang up and ran to the table to have him explain it to her.

He did so, but she said she didn't think she understood it.

"Well, you will when you see it work," he replied, as he rolled up the drawings and prepared to go to the office of the mills with them.

"I am going shopping," Edith said, "and you can ride with me. I'll let you out at the mills."

They drove down to the mills, and then Harry left her and went to the office.

McCreary was there. The old mill owner studied the drawings a long time and finally said:

"I'll have to have one built ere I can make sure it will work."

"Yes, that's the best way."

"Will you see to its being done in the right way? You can have all the best workmen in the mill at your command."

"Yes, of course," and he began at once to order certain pieces of machinery made of certain sizes and shapes.

In a few days they were ready, and Harry set to work fitting them together in a private room, with only Mr. McCreary and himself as witnesses.

When it was all in proper position he turned on the steam, which a pipe had been laid for, and watched the result with bated breath.

"It goes!" exclaimed McCreary.

"It goes!" repeated Harry.

The two shook hands heartily over their success, and McCreary said to Harry:

"I'll buy or go into copartnership with you—just as you wish."

"What sort of a copartnership?" Harry asked him.

"In the manufacture of the engines," was the reply.

"I'll let you know to-morrow."

"Very well. In the meantime I'll make an application for a patent on this invention. It's worth a million if a dollar."

That evening Harry had a talk with Edith and her father over the matter. The judge advised him to go into business with McCreary.

"It will give you a place in the business world," he said. "If any money is needed I can put it up for you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Soon after the invention was made Mr. McCreary announced that he had entered into a partnership with the inventor—Harry Thorne—for the manufacture of the machines and engines under the firm name of McCreary & Thorne.

People were astonished. But all railroad men who had examined the invention pronounced it a wonderful improvement. Locomotive builders in other cities and other countries sent experts to examine and report upon it. Long ere the new plant was ready for business, other companies had agreed on royalties to be paid for the use of the improvement that had been made. Harry Thorne at once became famous as an inventor, and such were the fine things said and written about him that Edith was glad that she gave up her cherished trip around the world in order to let him work out the invention.

While waiting for the plant to be made ready, Harry went to work to make some improvements on the old-style fire engine—like Old Put. He made a hydraulic improvement which gave immense additional pressure in forcing the water through the nozzle.

A test of its power staggered even Uncle Billy, and he told the boys to challenge the other fire companies to a water-throwing contest.

"But keep your mouths shut," he said to them.

"They are going to have a parade a week from Wednesday," said Tom Wilson. "It is to be a contest between steam fire-engines. We are not expected to compete with them. But we can be on the ground with Old Put and show 'em a thing or two."

The boys hugged themselves in their joy over the prospect of a victory.

Not one of them told the secret, and when the day came Old Put had a place in the parade, and received an ovation all along the line of march.

Two carriages, containing those whose lives had been saved at fires by the boys, came on behind them.

Edith was among them, and everywhere she was greeted with waving hats, canes, and handkerchiefs. Her romance was inseparably connected with the Old Put boys, and it appealed to the hearts of old and young.

But the parade had a greater surprise for the people when the companies ranged in line in one of the city squares to make a test of water-throwing qualities.

Columbia made the first throw amid a storm of cheers from thousands.

Then Brandon No. 2 threw a stream steady and straight, beating Columbia a few feet. The other steamer then followed, but could not come up to the record made by Brandon No. 2. After that came Old Put.

The crowd laughed at the idea of the boys throwing water against steam engines, though they cheered the plucky fellows for the fine record they had made as firemen.

At the word of command the boys manned the pump.

The stream began to spurt; Tom Wilson was at the nozzle, and held it at the right angle so the people could see the stream, going farther and farther as the boys toiled at the pump.

"Power, boys!" cried Harry, through a trumpet as he stood up in the carriage by the side of Edith. "Harder! Harder! Altogether! Give 'em Old Put!"

The stream grew longer—longer till a roar from the multitude told that the Old Put boys had beaten steam engines for the first time since the latter had come into use. Edith sprang upon the seat, her hand on Harry's shoulder, and saw the

stream going many feet beyond the point reached by the others. She waved her handkerchief above her head, and cried out:

"We've beat 'em! We've beat 'em, boys! My brave boys!" and then, in her impulsive enthusiasm she threw her arms round Harry's neck and kissed him in the presence of fully five thousand people.

The steam firemen were dumfounded. The vast crowd made the welkin ring with shouts. Never did Brandon witness such a scene in her streets. The mayor and chief of the fire department stood up in a carriage and waved their hats for ten minutes. A solid mass of people around Harry's carriage took the horses out of their harness, and pulled the victorious young inventor through the streets. Wreaths were snatched from the engines and cast into the carriage until both Harry and Edith were almost buried under them. She took up one and placed it on Harry's head, thus crowning him in the presence of the vast throng.

After the excitement had died out Harry told the chief of the fire department what he had done to Old Put that enabled the boys to beat the steam engines, adding:

"I am going to get out a patent on the invention, and when it is placed on steam fire-engines they can throw a stream with a force that would knock down a horse."

When the trick became known the other firemen were quite relieved. But the laugh was on them, for they had been badly beaten where they had not even expected an opponent.

That was Harry's last appearance in public with Old Put's boys. He devoted himself to the business started with McCreary, and soon he became noted for keen business talent among business men. He gave the engine to the boys, who ever after kept it, refusing a fine steamer when offered them by the city a year later. They had won such fame with the old engine that nothing could induce them to part with it.

About a year after his marriage Harry was made happy by the birth of a boy. They called him Harry, Jr., and the boys elected him a member of Old Put ere he was two weeks old.

Etta Thorne married a wealthy young man of Brandon, and Tom Wilson married Sadie Carroll, the young girl whom Harry had saved at a fire by lashing her to his back and climbing down the lightning rod with her.

Theodore Cadmus spent six months in an asylum, and was pronounced cured by the managers. His mother took him to Europe and kept traveling about for four years ere they returned to Brandon. Harry and Edith had two children then. They were ever after as strangers to the Cadmus family.

Harry Thorne is now a millionaire and one of the most successful business men in Brandon. He is the most liberal friend to firemen in all the county, and they never have a celebration without having a fat donation from him. His name is yet a tower of strength among Old Put, or the Fire Boys of Brandon.

THE END.

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